

Submitter: Christine Sherrell

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Business and Labor

Measure: HB4002

I oppose HB 4002. If this paid overtime for agriculture labor is passed it will cause tremendous financial stress not only to the farmer, but to the the employee as well. The farmer/owner is not in a financial position to pay this overtime rate for a crop that won't generate revenue until the following year. Crop prices are not a pre-determined set amount that the farmer/owner can budget on, it's always an estimate based on previous crop, and based on the mercy of Mother Nature, which isn't so kind to our farmers. The farmer/owner will be forced to limit their existing employees to a 40 hour work week and possibly have to use H2A workers who do not live in the community in which they work to help with harvest. The rising cost of fuel, spray and fertilizers are negatively impacting our farmers as well this year. This will also cause great financial burden to the farm laborers who are currently living in their working communities (some who have worked for generations) as they count on those extra hours and longer days during harvest to make a nice rate of pay, especially if they are hard workers. The lifestyle of a farmer and farm laborer is a very special relationship, often very close. I work for a few orchardist in the Hood River Valley and the kindness and generosity I have seen truly warms my heart. Some have generously paid for part of college tuition of their employee's children, often there are after harvest bonus for a faithful job well done! Housing, and utilities paid for year round, as are cell phones and vehicles, some cover medical expenses, and retirement. Some have even helped their employees to purchase land to begin their own personal farm.

Another concern is that if this passes it will cause our community members, who are employed as farm laborers, great financial stress and force them to uproot their families and relocate to a place they can afford to live. Hood River is already an expensive community and families are struggling in this economy to make it. Loosing local families will also have a negative impact on school enrollment as well as revenue for our city and county. Let's not add to the burden of local farmers in our community who would be forced to limit work to their year round employees who want to continue with the established lifestyle of farm laborer. I encourage you to oppose this HB.