

Submitter: Jed Hassinger

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Business and Labor

Measure: HB4002

Dear members of the House Committee on Business and Labor,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 4002. I am writing to express my opposition to HB 4002, as the bill would have negative consequences for everyone involved.

My farm produces specialty crops including grass seed, sunflower seed, and peppermint, all of which can involve intensive hand labor during peak times of the year. Farmworkers have the expectation and oftentimes the desire to work more than 40 hours per week to take advantage of the daylight hours and maximize their earnings. The work demand on farms is very uneven across the year and the opportunity to work longer hours during peak times allows farmworkers to make up for the lack of work during the slow parts of the season. As employers, we do all we can to compensate farmworkers fairly, paying well above the minimum wage to account for the type of labor and number of hours worked, as well as paying end of season bonuses. Much of the labor on our farm involves hand-weeding, and the economics simply don't justify paying overtime wages at 1.5x the base rate for this type of labor. We don't have the luxury of setting the prices we collect for our products, and are forced to make tough decisions to remain in business.

While most farms like ours will find ways to deal with the increased costs associated with an overtime mandate, farmworkers will be hit harder. Many will see their hours capped near the overtime threshold for the reason stated above. Farmworkers will in turn be forced to seek secondary employment. Farms like ours will have to either hire additional laborers, rely more on chemical control methods, invest more in automation, and/or shift cropping regimes. Farmworkers will expend more resources traveling between jobs, spend more time seeking work and commuting with no increase in compensation.

Please carefully consider the consequences that an agricultural overtime mandate would have. Although a few types of farm operations have the ability to charge more for their products to compensate for increased labor costs, most in Oregon cannot, and will be forced to adapt in ways that will have devastating impacts for farmworkers.

Thank you for your consideration.