

Submitter: Angi Bailey
On Behalf Of: Opposition to HB 4002
Committee: House Committee On Business and Labor
Measure: HB4002

My name is Angi Bailey. I own and operate Verna Jean Nursery east of Gresham, Oregon. Our tree nursery would be impacted by this proposal. But I am not writing in on behalf of my family and my farm today. I serve as the President of the Oregon Farm Bureau and am here on behalf of our nearly 7,000 family farm and ranch members today. I know that we appear in front of you frequently. Our intention is always to help legislators understand the impacts of policies on our membership, with the goal of enabling our family farms and ranches to remain viable today and into the future. I have worked on numerous high-profile issues over the years – from field burning bans to minimum wage increases to restrictions on crop production tools, you have often heard us explain how proposals will impact the viability of Oregon’s family farms and ranches, which are over 96% family owned. I have never before seen so many of our members terrified about the immediate loss of their farms and ranches.

As a farm employer, I can tell you we value our employees, we work closely alongside them on our farms, and we strive to pay them well for the hard work they do for us. However, as our economic analysis demonstrated, our farms are price-takers who compete in a global marketplace. I do not know a single family owned and operated farm who can afford the increased costs of overtime for their employees, most of whom are already making well above minimum wage. Instead, we will have to cap employee hours, hire additional part-time employees... if we can find them... or mechanize or change crops to avoid hiring labor. In the meantime, we have to explain to our employees, who depend on the income from our farms and ranches, that they cannot work more than 40 hours week, in spite of them asking for additional hours and in spite of the damage it will cause to their ability to support themselves and their families.

We are here today with one request for you – if you value Oregon’s family farms and our employees, please work with us to find a workable solution that protects our farms and ranches and preserves our agricultural jobs. We need a higher hour threshold, we need seasonality, and we need accommodations for our livestock producers. We are willing to find an equitable solution that honors the value of our employees to our farms while protecting our ability to farm. Please help us find that solution.