

Submitter: Spencer Trumm

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Business and Labor

Measure: HB4002

Dear Chair Holvey, Vice Chairs Grayber and Bonham, and members of the committee,

My name is Spencer Trumm and I live in East Portland. I am writing to urge you to support HB 4002.

When I was a teenager, I volunteered in service to a nonprofit that serves migrant worker communities. On my first visit to a migrant labor camp, I was shocked to see the living and working conditions endured by farmworkers. I saw the endless rows of stoop crops that they break their bodies to harvest. I saw squalid, bedbug-infested barracks, where workers and their families live, crammed together in close quarters. I saw them hard at work in the hot summer sun, doing the manual labor that puts dinner on so many Americans' tables.

What I saw at the migrant labor camp inspired me to deepen my involvement in the struggle for farmworker rights by volunteering with the nonprofit's mobile medical clinic. Between interviewing individual workers and organizing the clinic's records, I saw countless receipts of the toll that farm work took on field laborers' bodies: backs that ached from stooping and bending, eyes and lungs damaged by pesticides and dust, and arthritis exacerbated by the constant strain of work. They still face all these risks and more today, and must now also contend with the COVID-19 pandemic and the dangers it poses to people living and working in close proximity to each other.

No one can credibly dispute the importance of farmworkers' labor. Yet on farms across the USA, workers are not paid extra for working overtime, and are thus unable to reap the benefits of their long hours of hard work. This feature of American labor law was not caused by accidental oversight, but by an exception written into the 1938 Federal Labor Standards Act (FLSA) as a concession to legislators from the Jim Crow South, who were at loathe to mandate standards that protected their region's predominantly Black sharecroppers and farm laborers. This exception never should have existed and it is well past time for Oregon to play its part in righting this historical wrong.

Passing HB 4002 is a critical step in treating our essential farmworkers with the dignity and respect they deserve. It is not too much to ask employers to pay their employees an honest, time-and-a-half wage for overtime work, particularly when that rate is phased in over multiple bienniums. And make no mistake, Oregon's farmworkers earn that pay. Every second they spend at work in our state's fields,

orchards, ranches, warehouses, and farms feeds Oregonians.

Please pass HB 4002 without delay. We owe our farmworkers so much for their labor and it is high time we paid them accordingly.

Very truly yours,
Spencer Trumm