

Submitter: Renae Corn

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Farm Worker Overtime

Measure: HB4002

My Name is Renae Corn; my husband Bruce and I farm in the Nyssa-Ontario Oregon area. We grow sugar beets, onions, corn and wheat; farming land that has been farmed by our family since 1938. We haven't always owned the farms we grow crops on. We have worked extremely hard and been fair with others around us. We currently farm around 1200 acres. We have two employees that we pay year around. We also employ 2 others for about 6-8 months a year and about 15 others as needed during weeding and harvest seasons. We are very concerned about the impact that HB4002, the Ag overtime bill could have on our operation.

We are good to our employees and treat them fairly. That is why we have several that return year after year to work for us. Our main employee doesn't work in the winter months but still receives paychecks. We allow for time off for family trips and illness. We also provide our employees with a vehicle to drive to and from work with fuel, and end of year bonuses.

We believe that HB4002 to be flawed in the mandatory overtime pay for Ag employees. I am concerned that farm employees will see their paychecks reduced or jobs cut if overtime pay is required after 40-hours. We anticipate that we are also going to be forced provide health care coverage as well as paid sick leave. These are very difficult mandates for farmers to have to comply with. We ask for more cooperation from lawmakers, labor representatives and farm groups to come together with a fair solution for employees and employers on compensation.

It has been said Ag employers always are crying that this will break them. Ag commodities prices have been historically high in the recent years. The minimum wage increases also occurred at the same time. We cannot rely on that to be the case in the future. We are bracing for a doubling of our fuel prices and other inputs this year. Unfortunately farmers and ranchers do not set the prices they receive for goods they produce. We cannot increase the sale price of our crops when labor costs increase. Consumers in the global commodity market set our prices.

This bill will cost our farm thousands of dollars extra in labor costs. In other industries it is possible for shift work. But in our industry our irrigators need to follow up twice a day with how the water is running. Just this past year we saw the devastating damage that can happen when water isn't properly tended due to someone who is in experienced not understanding how to manage it!

You may be forcing farmers to limit the number of hours that employees work to 40 hours per week. In agriculture it is difficult to have different workers for shifts. We are talking about trying to stretch manpower as it has been extremely difficult to even get people to work on the farms. Now you are looking at enacting legislation that could make it even more difficult.

As a family business, we can't operate at a loss year-over-year. Mandating overtime

after 40-hours demands wages that are not possible with the economics of agriculture and will result in reduced pay and opportunities for farm employees. Only seven states have adopted Ag overtime policies, and most have crafted policies that ensure that local farms can remain viable and that employees' jobs and paychecks are protected. Several states have adopted policies to meet seasonal needs and others established higher overtime thresholds that help avoid some of the worst consequences.

I urge you to oppose an overtime mandate at 40-hours in HB 4002A. We would rather take our chances making our case to BOLI than deal with the immediate consequences of the passage of HB 4002A for my farm and my employees. Please help us save agricultural jobs and family farmers - VOTE NO ON HB 4002A!