



February 24, 2022

Dear Members of the Joint Committee on Farm Worker Overtime,

My name is the Rev. Connie Yost and I am the President of Farm Worker Ministry Northwest. I represent the faith community in Oregon which supports farm workers in their struggle for dignity, justice and equity.

I am writing in strong support of HB 4002, Farmworker Overtime, with the provision that the implementation phase be shortened to three years.

We believe it is our moral imperative to uphold farm workers inherent worth and dignity by ensuring that these essential workers who feed us are treated with all the protections for their safety, health and economic well-being as other workers. These workers who are so invisible from most people's daily lives are too easily forgotten, exploited and scapegoated due to their economic, immigration and racial status.

The historical treatment of farm workers is an issue of racial justice, and Oregon should make sure that all labor laws include farm workers. This includes overtime for farm workers, paying farm workers one and a half times their usual wage for all hours worked over 40 hours per week. Farm work is extremely hard work and farm workers are at risk for poor health outcomes, shortened life span, and work-related injury due to pesticides, overwork, lack of water and breaks, weather, wildfires and smoke, unsafe working conditions, poverty wages and the poor housing and nutrition that often accompanies these poverty wages.

In the last couple of years, we have seen how truly essential these workers are as they continue to show up despite facing a respiratory pandemic, wildfires, a winter storm and deadly heat waves. Farm workers are poor people who cannot afford to miss work when they have no other economic safety net. It is unconscionable that farm workers receive poverty wages, too often wage theft, and no overtime pay. Oregon can and must do all we can to ensure that they are paid fairly for their labor.

Washington and California already have farmworker overtime laws on the books. To be competitive, Oregon farmworker employers must pay overtime. We want to help support those farmers, making the transition as easy and clear as possible.

We urge you to end the long-standing racist exclusion of farmworkers from overtime protections. We urge you to pass HB4002 with a three year implementation rather than five years.

Sincerely,

Rev. Connie Yost, President

Farm Worker Ministry Northwest