



February 24, 2022

**Testimony of Leland Baxter-Neal, Director of Advocacy
On behalf of Latino Network
In Support of HB 4002
Joint Committee of Farmworker Overtime**



Dear Chair Taylor, Chair Holvey, and Members of the Joint Committee of Farmworker Overtime

Latino Network appreciates the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HB 4002 to provide farmworkers with overtime pay.

Latino Network is a culturally specific nonprofit serving Latinx youth and families in Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington counties. Our organization provides transformative services to more than 10,000 Latinx youth, families, and community members in multiple areas including education, family stability, housing support, juvenile justice, legal navigation, and advocacy.

Latino Network provided supportive testimony for this bill when heard previously in this session. That testimony is included further below. **However, today we are providing the additional testimony of a grower in our community**, who asked us to share the below statement but requested that it not be attributed:

“I oversee a medium scale berry farming operation in Washington. When I heard that the Washington state legislature was considering legislation to make farm workers eligible for overtime, this prompted me to examine how we were treating our small, year-round farm crew. They typically work seven days a week and up to 12 hours a day—often in hot, sunny conditions—during the harvest.

Why shouldn't they be eligible to earn overtime? We decided to implement paying overtime to our crew last January. Yes, our labor costs increased. But guess what: even though we offered OT, PTO and medical benefits, we were unable to hire additional workers. The food and agricultural industry on the West Coast is confronting a massive labor shortage. In my opinion, farm owners and operators would be far better served by taking measures to improve the livelihoods of their employees and focusing on addressing the root causes of our labor shortages than engaging in unconscionable lobbying to deprive farm workers a fair shake.”

We urge this committee to pass a farmworker overtime policy that moves as quickly as possible to provide agricultural workers in the State of Oregon with time-and-a-half overtime pay when they work more than 40 hours in a workweek.

Farmworkers and their families are community members, program participants, and employees of Latino Network. They are our friends and family. We honor the work they do in Oregon's farms and fields so that we all may eat. We know the sacrifices farmworkers make to put food on their families' tables, and ours.

In discussing this bill with our community and our allies, we spoke with the

Farmworkers in Oregon have labored throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, through toxic wildfire smoke, and amidst deadly heat waves. Just this past summer, we and many others mourned the senseless and preventable death of Sebastian Francisco Perez, a farmworker who died the day after his 38th birthday working through extreme heat.

For too long, farmworkers in Oregon have been denied the basic rights that other workers have been afforded. **It is never the wrong time to do the right thing.** We cannot as a state continue to exclude farmworkers from earning a living wage. To do so forces agricultural workers to work long hours in pursuit of just compensation. And yet, **farmworkers are some of the lowest-paid workers in the state, with a median income of \$28,000.**

Farmworkers are not second-class workers. They deserve to earn an honest day's salary for an honest day's work, and to still have time to be with their families, help their kids with their homework, or rest and recover from the backbreaking work of field labor.

Latino Network urges this committee to vote yes on HB 4002, and to ensure that this policy provides farmworkers with overtime pay as soon as possible when they work for more than 40 hours in a workweek.

Thank you kindly for this opportunity,



Leland Baxter-Neal
Latino Network
Director of Advocacy