

Submitter: Crystal Glaze-Pickerd
On Behalf Of: Oppose HB 4002
Committee: Joint Committee On Farm Worker Overtime
Measure: HB4002

I am a pear and cherry farmer and have agricultural employees, many of whom come back to my farm year after year, many having worked for us for 10 or more years. I am concerned about the impact that HB 4002A, the ag overtime proposal, would have on my farm and employees. I do everything I can to compensate employees fairly, but as a farmer, I am a price taker. This means that I cannot increase the sale price of my crops when labor costs increase. Consumers in the global commodity market set our prices. Any added costs will have to be absorbed by my family's farm. That's the economic reality for those of us in agriculture.

Oregon's cherry and pear crops are labor intensive and have peak seasonal requirements, including harvesting, pruning, and thinning. If this bill passes, I will be forced to limit the number of hours that employees work to 40 hours per week and try to find additional employees to fill in the extra hours. Just trying to find enough employees in the past several years has been a big problem, so finding additional employees will likely be difficult if not impossible. As a result, I'm not confident our crops will be harvested in time. Limiting employee hours is not something we want to do, but if this bill passes, it is the practical reality.

Limiting employee work hours to 40 per week will negatively impact the earnings of our employees.

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.

A tax credit is not a workable or durable solution to farmers paying for overtime. Tax credits will be phased out as soon as a recession hits, cannot be enacted in perpetuity, and, as crafted, phase down when growers will need them most. We need a workable and lasting solution that can only be found by adjusting the structure of the overtime proposal to account for the seasonal and year-round needs of the agriculture industry.

I urge you to oppose an overtime mandate at 40-hours in HB 4002A. Please help us save agricultural jobs and family farmers - VOTE NO ON HB 4002A!