
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon

February 24, 2022

Co-Chairs Taylor and Holvey, and Members of the Joint Committee on Farm Worker Overtime,

As members of the Fair Shot for All Coalition, Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon urges support for HB 4002. We stand with our reproductive justice partners who have long proclaimed that the fight for justice and equity does not end with having the right to make reproductive and sexual health decisions. A critical aspect of that work is advocating for people to have the power and resources necessary to raise and support their families in safe environments and healthy communities—that includes being properly compensated for a fair day’s work.

Agricultural labor is physically taxing and often dangerous. Farm workers risk exposure to pesticides known to cause cancer, respiratory problems, and in some cases infertility and miscarriage with prolonged exposure. Working longer hours only exacerbates these risks. It is well documented that working upwards of 40 hours per week is associated with increased rates of injury, illness, and mortality. According to a paper released by OHSU, “[f]arm workers, and working mothers in particular, who regularly work long hours are plagued by an interdependent combination of stress and fatigue while attempting to perform family responsibilities like childcare, cooking, and cleaning before and after the workday.”¹ As a result, migrant and seasonal farmworkers experience higher rates of specific health problems such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease and cancer than other Oregonians.

Farmworkers are frontline workers who continue to show up despite facing a respiratory pandemic, wildfires, and increasingly severe weather. Their work is place-based and time-bound (due to crop harvest windows), which puts them at higher risk of adverse health effects from prolonged exposure to extreme heat and wildfire smoke. Wildfires happen most often during peak harvesting season when workers can earn the most money and may be forced to choose between their health and putting food on their families’ table. Oregon farmworkers are some of the lowest paid workers in our state, with a median annual income of \$28,000. Additionally, most of these workers and their families do not have healthcare coverage through their employer.

HB 4002 provides farmworkers with the overtime benefits that have been available to most workers since the Federal Labor Standards Act. It guarantees overtime pay to agricultural workers after 40 hours in a workweek at one and one-half times the employee’s regular rate of pay. This includes farmworkers who are paid by piece-rate (i.e., how many crops they produce) or hourly.

Every single day, farmworkers put their minds, their bodies, and the health of their families on the line to provide our communities with the food on our tables. The more than 86,000 agricultural workers who would benefit from the passage of HB 4002 deserve to be paid fairly for the hard work they do to

¹ https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/c8357af7-9c3e-4b52-9725-4de56f1d3cea/PCUN_White%20Paper-Overtime%20Pay_FINAL.pdf

support Oregon's multi-billion dollar agriculture industry. Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon respectfully urges the committee's support of HB 4002 to ensure farmworkers in Oregon are adequately paid for their labor.

Sincerely,
Cassie Purdy
Political Director
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon