

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

My name is Catherine Thomasson, MD.

I am writing in support of farmworker overtime and HB 4002.

As a physician during training, I worked 100 hours a week. I did not earn overtime pay, but I did earn a decent wage. Working so many hours a week is not healthy, especially in cold or hot conditions. It can cause depression, stress related illnesses of hypertension, predisposition to diabetes, and cardiac disease. Farmworkers have extra social pressures including lack of adequate housing, health care and low pay. The life expectancy of farmworkers is the lowest in the state.

So, it only makes sense that Farmworkers should receive overtime pay after 40 hours in a workweek at one and one-half times the employee's regular rate of pay.

This bill acknowledges the struggles of smaller farms and the financial difficulties they face. But it also offers solutions to compensate them.

As a society, we should be looking at the cost of growing food and determine better solutions to overall subsidies. But that does not preclude the need to pay workers a living wage and one that reflects their sacrifice and their families in working overtime.

Farmworkers in many circumstances have not been able to advocate for themselves for fear of losing jobs. This bill is essential to provide pay for overtime that all other workers are provided.

I urge you to vote Yes on HB 4002 to pass farmworker overtime in the 2022 Legislative Session to ensure farmworkers in Oregon are paid fairly for their skilled and essential labor.

Sincerely,

Catherine Thomasson, MD  
Multnomah County