



Farmworkers and Latinx Families United

February 25, 2022

Chairs Taylor and Holvey , and Members of the Joint Committee on Farmworker Overtime,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Reyna Lopez, I am the President of Pinaros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste, Oregon's Farmworker Union, representing 6,793 Oregon farmworkers. We work in a network of 11 sister organizations and a coalition of 95 organizations who represent Oregon's diverse and proud farmworker community.

84 years ago this June, nearly all workers were granted overtime pay and protections in the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938. As you know, agricultural workers were purposefully excluded. Despite undertaking one of the most hazardous jobs in the United States, according to an Oregon State University Enumeration Study, to this day the 86,240 people working in Oregon farms are not eligible for basic overtime pay protections.

Overtime laws exist because the risk of injury and wear and tear to workers rises after 40 hours. Long work hours increase rates of injury and mental health stress, according to a recent study by OHSU, and negatively impact workers' families and quality of life. The report also said farmworkers being exposed to dangers like harmful chemicals, airborne organic dust and ammonia put them at greater risk than the general population of developing chronic respiratory diseases, skin disorders and hearing loss. They are at higher risk of developing chronic musculoskeletal pain, and working more than eight hours a day increases the risk of neck, back and knee pain.

A study in Oregon of 3,382 Latino farm workers found that working for more than 10 years in the field more than doubled their risk of obesity and increased their risk of high blood pressure by 1.72 times, according to the report. This is also in the top 26 percent of industries with the most injury rates. Our neighboring states to the north and south are already providing overtime pay protection: Oregon workers deserve the same.

PCUN supports legislative efforts to secure overtime protections beginning at 40 hours as soon as possible and including during harvest when farmworkers are worked the hardest. While our members believe five years is a long time to wait, we are supportive of House Bill 4002. We



also value policy solutions currently under consideration to help small and medium sized farms make the transition to overtime pay, including tax credits. While a lawsuit or rulemaking process might secure overtime pay more swiftly, we have trusted and invested in this process because of the deep value we place on the continued vitality of Oregon's agricultural sector and our interest in ensuring Oregon's family farms are supported throughout this transition.

I have spoken in front of this Legislature many times on the issue of overtime pay for farmworkers. We have joined work sessions, spoken extensively with lawmakers, and testified in dozens of hearings. More than 300 people submitted testimony in support of HB 4002 just two weeks ago.

For 84 long years, Oregon farmworkers have waited for this moment.

Now is the time to pass this bill and right this historic wrong.

Thank you for your leadership and your hard work. Oregon's farmworkers are deeply grateful.

Reyna Lopez, Executive Director
PCUN, Oregon's Farmworker Union