



Jefferson County Farm Bureau

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February 25, 2022

Joint Committee on Farm Worker Overtime
State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Or 97301

Opposed HB 4002 -A12

Dear Chairman Holvey and Chairwomen Taylor and Committee Members,

Jefferson County Farm Bureau is opposed to this bill for many reasons. HB 4002 as amended will have impacts that this body may not be able to undo once the HB 4002-12 amendments are law. Every agricultural operation is unique in the crops that they grow, labor requirements and inputs used. It isn't like a factory producing widgets. You don't turn farming on and off in eight-hour shifts. Farming is a way of life with profit margins unknown and unstable due to us being price takers and not price setters since we are competing in a global market place where labor costs are not the same. Oregon has some of the highest wages in the United States let alone worldwide. The labor force has been tight for several years. Moving to ag-overtime for seasonal jobs won't provide more workers or guarantee the workers will get overtime. Ag overtime will force many farmers to change their labor requirements. The options are limited: (1) change to lower labor crops (2) bring in more mechanical equipment to reduce labor (3) reduce wages and benefits so you can adjust to 40 hours a week (if you can find more workers to meet the new law) and keep the costs to fit the profit business model or (4) go out of business. Yes, agriculture is a business and to stay in business you need to cover your expenses vs your income.

Listening to the Work session last night held by this joint committee gave my board and members that were listening pause to think how disconnected the legislative body is with what and how agriculture operates in Oregon. Our Representative Bonham showed his knowledge of his district and the impacts this bill will have as passed out of committee on a straight party-line vote. We appreciate his efforts and voice. It was disappointing to watch how even his voice was ignored let alone ours during the testimony. We debated sending a letter today, but we want it on record as a "I told you so". Having a report due in the late fall seems backwards. Our logic would be to have it first before the bill was moved to the floor. Logic appears to not apply with this bill.

Last year in December during the special session both Oregon Legislative Chambers authorized for special agriculture funding to help with the drought, ice storm and heat dome that had major impacts on Oregon agriculture on top of what the Covid-19 pandemic had already done. We thank you for that, but a disconnect is very present with this body moving forward with HB 4002-A12. Why would this body elect to help agriculture in December recognizing how fragile of a state we are in and then turn around in less than 90 days and decide to move forward with a bill that will put an end to Oregon's agriculture as you know it today?

There is some perceived notion that those of us in agriculture that are farming don't really understand or know the impacts HB 4002-A12 will have on our livelihoods and operations. We truly do understand what HB 4002-A12 will do to us and our workforce and the continuation of us farming. We may not be experts in the policy making arena but we do understand survival of our operations. It felt like if you give us a tax credit (that can take two years to use) that is enough to ignore what farmers have told you during the hearings. Ag did not ask for the tax credit or want it. The big corporate farms see it as a way to make money. It is better to make changes to survive early than to die slowly. The aging population of Oregon farmers just got older and may choose to retire sooner than later. While the younger farmers starting to farm will see no future when business models show that they can't make it.

One over-arching hidden impact when agriculture can't make it anymore is the push to develop the farmland and the climate impact when the green space is gone and made into houses and parking lots. When you have a resource that isn't profitable or sustainable then you look to change the use for survival.

Sincerely,

Mickey Killingsworth
Secretary-Treasurer

Home of North Unit Irrigation District