

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,

I am a very small producer and I don't employ a lot of outside labor. I have chosen to be a simple shepherd and not an economist which is my education and training. I can tell you that moving HB 4002 -A12 forward will have economic impacts to the agricultural industry and the labor force that they currently use. I wanted to engage with the U of O Economist that his statements were also misleading. It is always how the questions are asked and the parameters set in any study. All second-year econ students know that. It wasn't as if someone was lying.

What did I hear last night?

- (1) The agricultural operations don't operate on eight (8) hour shifts five days a week. The fact is agriculture is a seasonality employer based upon the crops being raised from planting through harvesting. Example: if I told you that you can only buy certain food items or eat at a certain time of the day unless you paid more how would that impact your decision making and budget?
- (2) Agriculture in Oregon has had some tough years with the Covid pandemic, drought, ice storms, wind events, wildfires and smoke and the recent heat dome. Just trying to survive has been hard enough. If you as a governing body thought that Oregon's agriculture was strong, vibrant and robust than why was a special session called in December of 2021 to give a bail out to agriculture?
- (3) An economic study will show how damaging HB 4002-A12 will be to Oregon's agriculture due to the fragile state of agriculture today and the recovery needed. The study will also show which segments of agriculture will be hit the hardest and if ag-overtime will actually accomplish what the supporters of HB 4002 desire. It would be prudent for this body to take the time to get that information to have before the decision making and not base a vote upon emotion or good well..." we are doing the right thing for the workers and we don't believe that HB 4002-A12 will have any real, long-term impacts to agriculture in Oregon...ag will adjust over the transition period and with the tax credit."
- (4) This debate isn't about wages to the ag workforce. I can't even hire someone for under \$20 an hour to clean pens during lambing. The labor demand market sets the wages. With the short supply of workers higher wages are paid and more hours are available for those that want to work them. I feel that this debate is about having the ag labor force only work eight hours a day and 40 hours a week. Everyone can choose to work where they want and do the type of work that they want. Yet listening to advocates and farm workers and some of their family members it was as if they think getting ag overtime is going to greatly benefit them. The model used by McDonalds and the Bi Marts of the world is what will happen to agriculture. The reason additional hours exist is that labor supply is short and workers want to make as much money as they can in a short period of time.
- (5) This has become an emotional topic in the agriculture community. First how do you as an employer explain to your employees (without being in some labor law violation) what the changes from HB 4002-A12 will do to your operation's bottom line and how those changes will impact the labor force that you use. Then there is the stress for survival as an agricultural operation and how will you compete nationally and globally. What are the impacts to your family and livelihood?

Farmers are good people and we try to take care of our employees so they return. Oregon has some of the strongest laws for protecting farm workers. Even though Chair Taylor asked for decorum with some speakers it went unnoticed because it is their sound bite. It needs said that ag is not the sweat shops of the garment industry age as we have been painted. Most farmers that I know like myself work alongside of our employees and put in even longer hours to keep our operations running smoothly.

I asked for HB 4002-A12 to be moved to Rules or some non-policy committee last night when I testified. Then I watched the work session discussion on both sets of amendments. It is as if we (ag) are in the old cell phone commercial where they say "can you hear me now!" looking for reception, the reception was not found as this bill was moved to the house floor in the form that the majority felt would work for ag. Where is rural broadband when you need it?

Sincerely,

Mickey Killingsworth

Mickey Killingsworth
Simple Shepherd
M.D. Acres
Madras, Oregon