

I am in strong opposition to HB2548. Your continual laying on of higher labor costs and unnecessary regulations are putting the farmers out of business. This is not a cliché or catch phrase... You are putting us out of business.

We are a 4-generation cherry farm. Our Son and grandsons have invested their time and wishful thinking into taking the reins soon, but we fear we might be telling them, "Sorry, but the Government is taking us down, and we don't want that trouble for you."

As far as the overtime Agriculture hours rules you are implementing, you are hurting our workers, jeopardizing our crops and trying to put the Agriculture Industry out of business. Our workers do not want to work for minimum wage, even if it is \$18 to \$20 per hour, as a greater portion of them (our annual regular crew) are making up to \$40 per hour on piece rate. We can't pay some by the piece rate and others by minimum wage, AS THEY TOO are capable of doing much better than minimum wage as we move into heavier varieties. Most likely they would not bother to make the trip up here for minimum wage. You are already hurting them with your agriculture hours limitation. They come here anxious to work, wanting to help us harvest our crop, and you jump in with all these restrictions that have them sitting in their cabins wishing they could be out there finishing the job. The weather and crop ripening issues already have them sitting with idle timeit creates automatic days off, as we don't pick in the rain when ladders might be wet etc.. And there are days when we have to wait for the next variety to ripen before we can get back out there...more days off....Then you come in and say they can only work 40 hours in a week, which likely leaves what they are picking over ripening while they sit in their cabin waiting for the new week to begin. (You say "Pay them overtime"and we are trying to tell you "We would Love to pay them overtime" but each bucket is representative of what it takes to stay in business, and the money IS NOT THERE.) You can only spend the amount that comes

in for that bucket...it has to pay for picking wages, harvest costs (tractor crews), fuel, fertilizer, sprays, water, bees, etc....and IT IS NOT THERE. We are losing money each year.

As for you taking away our at-will employment rights, as I mentioned, we are a 4-generation family farm operation. Our employees are also generational on this farm. Kids who came here with their parents 40 years ago are now the ones who return here to spend 4 weeks each year with us...I cant remember anyone ever quitting over a grievance, and we never fire anyone except for serious infractions (like drinking on the job repeatedly...safety issue). Our crew comes up from California where many of them own their own homes, and have a set round of employment throughout the spring through fall. They count on this job incorporated into their routine. People who don't know what's going on seem to think we need to enter in millions of foreign workers to harvest crops...NOT AT ALL TRUE...we have the majority of the workers already that rely on these jobs being there for them.

So it is time for you to take off your "9 to 5 hat", and put on your "squaring with reality hat". Stop making up a bunch of rules from behind your desk and come and experience this dilemma in real time, to better understand what you are trying to ask of us. For centuries, this farming thing has always worked itself out for the better to continue to exist to feed America.

Casey and Jody Pink

Pink-Pink Orchards