

My name is Vicki Helmig and I am a 1st generation farmer in your district, though my husband is a 3rd or more generation and our children farm with us and 3 of our 4 children intend to make that their career, unless legislation continues to make that impossible. We primarily grow timber, Christmas trees and filberts and additionally raise chickens for eggs, meat birds, lambs, produce, fruit and more and employ 3 full time employees and hire many contractors. We would like to go back to employing more full time workers, but are prohibited from doing so because of the legislation that keeps getting passed. It has become very prohibitive to have employees in Oregon in general, but especially in agriculture. I want to share with you my concerns about the real impacts of HB 2358 and SB 616 on both my farm and my employees.

These bills would require every farm and ranch in Oregon to pay overtime to employees after 40 hours of work. Currently, agriculture is exempt from overtime pay under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act and in most other states. These bills propose one of the most aggressive overtime policies in the country, which would be devastating for local farmers and our employees including our farm.

As a farmer, we are price takers, which means that we cannot simply increase the sale price of our crops to account for added labor costs. Consumers set our prices and will buy from other states or countries that sell at a cheaper price. In our area, we are already competing with a Mexico company that has bought up a lot of land in our area and brings labor up from Mexico and we cannot compete with them as it is. We will have to absorb any added overhead. That's the economic reality we deal with every day. We will not be able to afford the added payroll costs proposed in HB 2358 and SB 616, as it will likely cost us over \$65,000 in new labor costs. To stay in business, I will be forced to limit the number of hours worked by my employees to 40 hours in a week to avoid the added expense of overtime pay. I do not want to do this, and my employees do not want me to do this, but that is the practical reality of these bills. This is also a challenge as it is very difficult to find labor in agriculture, so we will be forced to look much further into further mechanizing our work and/or changing to crops that can be more mechanized, which will also have additional costs for machines we may not have.

Farmers and ranchers will have to mechanize operations, transition to less labor-intensive crops, or even move outside of Oregon to stay in business. Farm employees are at risk of losing their jobs if downsizing, switching crops, or mechanizing are the only options available to a farm or ranch. If this bill passes, we will need to reduce hours and further mechanize to stay in business.

As a family business, we can't operate at a loss year-over-year, so we have to control costs that seem to increase every year in Oregon. We know it's not the goal of these bills to reduce employee take-home pay, but HB 2358 and SB 616 demand wages that are not possible with the economics of agriculture and will result in reduced pay and hours for farm employees.

I am very concerned that this policy hasn't been well-vetted and will actually harm those it intends to help.

Please oppose HB 2358 and SB 616 this session. These bills would negatively impact not only family farmers and ranchers in Oregon, but also agricultural workers!