



Stayton Sublimity Chamber of Commerce
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March 5, 2021

Dear House Business & Labor Committee,

Stayton Sublimity Chamber of Commerce, represents a swath of communities in Marion & Linn Counties including Stayton, Sublimity, Scio, Aumsville, Turner, Scio and the Santiam Canyon. Much of the region is supported by agriculture, from grass seed to small orchards, vineyards, small ranches and food crops. We want to express our concerns regarding HB2358, on both the farmers and the employees who live and work in this region.

HB 2358 would require farms in Oregon to pay overtime to employees who work over 40 hours per week. In theory, it sounds like it would benefit those employees, right? Currently, agriculture is exempt from overtime pay under the federal FAIR LABOR STANDARDS ACT, due to the unique seasonal nature of agricultural production. Employees may work longer hours during peak season and may less or none for the duration of the year.

HB 2358 proposes the most aggressive policy in the country, in an area that shows a complete lack of understanding of the farming industry. Most farmers are already struggling with large amounts of money tied up in equipment, labor, and supplies. Some years farmers make money, others they lose money. It's not a lucrative business. For most it's simply a passion, a way of life. But it is a necessary business, because we all need the products they produce (food).

Added payroll costs will cost most farmers more than they can absorb, which will lead instead to limiting employees to 40 hours per week, actually taking much needed money away from those employees who need it, and potentially reduce overall production, creating a dependence on other states for what ours will no longer be producing.

Why? Because, unlike other businesses, farmers are "price-takers" meaning that they cannot simply "pass on" the additional expenses to the consumer, but rather pricing is set by consumers. If farmers attempt to raise prices, consumers will simply purchase goods elsewhere, from other states where they can be had for a better price.

We support our local farmers and farm workers. Agriculture is a way of life here, and we realize that our farmers can't operate at a loss year-after-year. While we understand that it's not the goal of HB 2358 to reduce take home pay or employment opportunities here in Oregon, but that is exactly what will happen if this bill passes.



Please oppose HB2358. This bill threatens to harm those it was intended to help.

Respectfully,
Carméle Bielenberg, Chamber CEO
David Giglio, Chairman: Chamber Governmental Affairs Committee