

I am writing to oppose HB 2358 which would mandate that agricultural employers pay overtime wages when employees work more than 40 hours in a work week. Agriculture is unique in the amount of labor that is required to grow and harvest crops and care for livestock. My husband and I farm in the Grande Ronde Valley in Eastern Oregon. We are a diversified farming operation raising a variety of grain and specialty seed crops. The payroll costs of HB 2358 would be devastating. We pay our employees very well and provide as many benefits as possible. This bill would result in lost jobs and lower wages being offered. With minimum wage already being high, we have to pay an individual (such as a high school student) with no skill set a high wage and the return on that investment is basically zero if they do not return the following year to work. Payroll is one of the biggest expenses agriculture faces.

Most Agriculture commodities operate on a global market. Farmers can not raise the amount of money received for their crops to cover extra costs such as overtime pay to employees. Almost every industry besides agriculture is able to pass the cost of increased operating cost onto the consumer. Agriculture already has to buy most inputs at retail costs and sells the commodities at wholesale.