

Mr. Chair and Members of the House Committee on Business and Labor, my name is Michelle Heaton. I am writing today on behalf of rural farm and ranch laborers. I am a small business owner and constituent of Klamath Falls and am appalled at the opposition of our local representatives to this bill. E. Werner Reschke calls this "A radical bill that could drastically change the landscape of rural Oregon." He asks "those who want to preserve our rural way of life to stand up and say NO". I cannot comprehend protecting a way of life that does not support proper compensation for people within our community who are dedicating overtime hours to work the land and do the hard labor it takes to operate a rural farm or ranch operation. A system that supports only the bottom line of gross profit for a business rather than give fair treatment financially to its laborers is not a system that benefits our community or economy. I have heard from the opposition that we need to "stand up for working families". What better way to stand up for working families than to pay a fair and reasonable wage? How is this a radical idea to treat people with dignity and pay what they have earned? The real fear of those opposing this bill is that by paying overtime wages to workers, the farm or ranch owners paying said overtime will see a shift in their profit margins. As a small business owner, and a mother in a rural Oregon community, I firmly state my position that if you cannot afford to properly compensate your employees, you must vastly re-evaluate your business ethics and personal choices. A business is only as strong as its employees, only successful if everyone down the line is succeeding. At what cost are you willing to cut costs? I support this bill that will benefit the laborers of rural Oregon. Everyone- wealthy, poor, small or large operations need to pay proper and fair compensation to those who have earned it.