

My name is Ben Stone, a second-generation Christmas Tree farmer located in Salem. Our business employs 30 full time workers ballooning to over 300 at peak harvest season. I am very concerned about the impact that both HB 2358 and SB 616 will have on our farm, family, and extended family i.e., employees.

The margins to be made on a farm are extremely slim, and annually getting slimmer with the rising cost of fuel, and the ever-increasing minimum wage.

There is absolutely no way that this increase in labor is something that can be passed on to the consumer. Cost is already so high we are at the top of our market. A large price hike that the passing of these bills would require is going to drive sales into the ground. With that will be the elimination of many full and hundreds of part time jobs.

Christmas Trees are not a commodity that can be grown anywhere in the country or even the state for that matter. Oregon is the largest producer of Christmas trees in the nation, to the tune of approximately 6 million trees annually, with most of that production coming from right here in the Willamette valley. Forcing growers to pay overtime will drive us out of business leaving a large hole in the supply of Christmas trees nationwide. Just imagine 6 million families not having a real Oregon Christmas tree to celebrate the holidays. The Grinch himself could not have done a better job destroying Christmas.

These bills are not just an attack on family farms and the extended families that run and manage them daily, but an attack on this community and country that rely on the unique crops that are grown in the fertile soils of Oregon.

I ask that you do not be a Grinch and oppose both HB 2358 and SB 616.

Thank you very much,

Ben Stone

BTN of Oregon