

Allan Van Metre  
Wimmers Orchard's

March 8, 2021

To Whom it May Concern,

As a Third Generation Small Ag Producer trying to raise three children on the same Farm their Great Grandfather originally purchased in the late 1940's, I strongly OPPOSE House Bill 2385. Our family farms Pears, Cherries, Apples, Peaches and Nectarines in Hood River County, and has done so for over 70 years now. Over the years the farm has had to grow in size to keep up with continually increasing Cost to Produce said fruits. What used to be an operation that could fully sustain a Family has become a yearly gamble to pay the bills and maintain our Legacy. Growth in acreage has become incredibly hindered by the cost of property and living in this county. Alternatives such as Leasing or Renting land is a losing proposition right now, given a depressed commodity return in both Pears and Apples the last several seasons. Moving the operation out of state isn't feasible, but Oregon is no longer an Ag Friendly state.

If HB 2385 were to pass, the increased cost of yearly Wages could affect our Operation by as much as 15-20%. That could mean upwards of \$60,000 in increased costs. In what has been VERY narrow profit margins for 3 seasons straight, that means losing our business and potentially the Land we live and work on.

If HB2385 were to pass, it would mean less money paid to the Men and Women who return here to work every year during peak season so pruning, hand thinning fruitlets, and harvest of all varieties. Since I cannot afford such a drastic increase in Wage Cost, the only alternative is reduction of hours during peak season to ensure employees do not exceed 40 hours per work week. Additionally, and further unjustified raise in minimum wage will require I cut hours even further. Currently, we have incurred minimum wage increases of roughly 20% over the last several growing seasons. In those same growing seasons our Gross Sales Returns across all commodities have DECREASED by more than that percentage for this operation. These facts do not make for sustainable business.

If HB2385 were to pass, the only possible alternatives for Small Ag Producers are to reduce laborer hours, or further mechanize their operations. The first option leaves all employees taking home less money. The second forces increased cost to convert and purchase equipment to handle mechanization. Neither sound like good options from a business standpoint.

House Bill 2385 is poorly thought out and I do not believe it speaks to the voice of your constituents. It will do much harm in this state if it were to pass. I strongly request this Bill NOT pass, on the basis of:

- 1)Lost wages for Ag Laborers
- 2)Lost jobs for Ag Laborers
- 3)Lack of sustainability which will SURELY lead to Less Family Farms in the State of Oregon

Thank you for your Consideration,

Allan Van Metre