

Testimony in regards to Oregon House Bill 2358

First off, the people that work on my farm work very hard in inclement weather conditions and I am thankful the people are here working with my family day in and day out, growing, harvesting and packaging vegetables is hard work there is no doubt about it, it is very tough work and it's a thankless job. The general public treats farmers like trash, not just farm workers. The vast majority of consumers buy based on price and we have no chance to survive when produce grown in Mexico, with lax to no labor laws, no workers rights, is allowed to freely compete against Oregon grown vegetables.

I am against overtime not because I don't want the people working with us to make more money, it's because I can't pay more when there are vegetables shipped into Oregon, California, and Washington from the country of Mexico. In Mexico, farm owners pay workers next to nothing at \$6.50-\$10 per day! I am constantly priced against Mexican grown produce by chain stores and wholesalers in the Portland Metro area, and on the west coast. The profit margin is very thin in farming already because what we grow are commodities. There is no more risk/reward equation in fresh vegetable farming, there is only risk and no reward. I would like to automate all functions of farming but there are things that cannot be automated and require hand labor. The produce grown in Mexico is very good quality and with Oregon setting rules for Oregon farmers that Mexico does not have to follow, it is slowly wiping the Oregon farmers out. The measure means well but the reality is your tying our hands behind our backs and Mexico will give us the knockout blow sooner rather than later. Fresh vegetable farming has no future in Oregon if Mexican farms are not held to the same standard, which will never happen.

Comparing construction and restaurants overtime to agriculture overtime is like comparing apples to oranges. Construction and restaurants have a level playing field with regards to labor and can price the services accordingly because construction and restaurants cannot be shipped in from Mexico like vegetables can. Construction and restaurants are only competing with workers from down the street that all fall under the same rules, they are not competing with workers from another country.

There is a reason why Nike manufactures shoes outside of the United States and has made billions of dollars doing so on the backs of low paid workers, which Oregon has no problem with.

If you can stop the flow of cheap vegetable commodities from Mexico, and all we have to do is compete with vegetables grown in the United states, farm owners can pay more to the employees.

As it is written today, all House Bill 2358 will accomplish is further exploitation of farm workers in Mexico and further destruction of Oregon farms. I urge you to oppose HB 2358 as it is currently written.

Thank you for your time,

Jason Montecucco
Montecucco Farms LLC.