



March 9, 2021

To whom it may concern,

My name is Mike Omeg. I am a fifth generation farmer and the Director of Business Operations at Orchard View Cherries in The Dalles. We grow and pack fruit from our 3,450 acres of cherry orchards using a team of 150 full-time and nearly 1250 seasonal domestic employees. Orchard View provides a living wage and benefits for our full-time workers.

Agricultural employees in Oregon are not the low wage workers many people imagine when they think of ag workers. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in May 2019, the average hourly wage for all employees in farming, fishing and forestry was \$17.26/hour in Oregon. The average hourly wage for entry level farm workers was \$13.52/hour in our state. These wages have continued to increase as indicated by the rise in the Adverse Effective Wage Rate (AEWR) put out by the US Department of Labor and used to determine wages for H2A guest workers. In 2019, the AEWR for Oregon was \$15.03. This year it is \$16.34. The AEWR is based on actual wages paid by agricultural employers in Oregon. Given these facts it is apparent that farm workers in Oregon are being paid above the Federal and State minimum wage.

Experienced agricultural laborers are in high demand in Oregon. We simply cannot afford to pay these workers low wages or treat them without respect if we wish them to continue to work for us.

Many farmers base hourly wages on the number of hours they expect employees to work annually. Often farmers adjust full-time employee wages up during the harvest season in recognition of the extra hours put in.

As a family-owned business, our employees are the heart of who we are and the work we do. We want to keep them safe, housed, and earning wages.

Sincerely,

Mike Omeg
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