



Date: February 8, 2022
To: House Business and Labor Committee
From: Jennifer Parrish Taylor, Director of Advocacy and Public Policy for the Urban League of Portland
Re: Support for Farmworker Overtime 2022, HB 4002

Chair Holvey, Vice Chairs Bonham and Grayber, and Members of the House Business and Labor Committee,

My name is Jennifer Parrish Taylor, and I am the Director of Advocacy and Public Policy with the Urban League of Portland. The Urban League of Portland is one of Oregon's oldest civil rights and social service organizations, empowering African-Americans and others to achieve equality in education, employment, health, economic security and quality of life. We do this by investing in stable housing; through workforce development; community health; education and well-being; for our youth, adults, and seniors. Our culturally specific programs and services, combined with our powerful advocacy and civic engagement, empowers Black communities to thrive across Oregon and SW Washington.

I am writing in support of HB 4002 and ending the long-standing racist exclusion of farmworkers from overtime protections as soon as possible. Farmworker overtime is important to our organization for the simple reason that farmworkers deserve equal treatment, and the same quality of life as any other worker. They are doing important, hard, and dangerous work in one of the largest sectors of our state economy, and they are essential in feeding families across Oregon.

By saying that this will disadvantage workers, we are veering away from what the root problem really is. This is about racial justice; this is about affording farmworkers the same rights as other workers in Oregon. This is about ending a Jim Crow exclusionary law in our state. Farmworker overtime is long overdue based on the racist legacy of excluding agricultural workers from overtime pay in the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) to maintain social and economic control of these workers. Back then the majority of farmworkers were Black former sharecroppers, whereas now we see that most farmworkers are immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean; many coming to Oregon for better opportunities not only for themselves, but their families.

Agricultural work is recognized as the occupation most likely to have mandatory overtime due, in part, to the seasonal nature of the industry. Farmworkers commonly perform up to 16 hours of work per day. Farmworkers are frontline workers who continue to show up to perform physically demanding manual labor despite facing a respiratory pandemic, wildfires, a winter storm and deadly heat waves. Agriculture workers deserve to be paid fairly for their labor.

Mandated overtime requires farm workers to spend less time with their families, take on greater financial and logistical strain trying to obtain childcare and/or bring children to their worksite. Additionally, the loss of time spent with family, may be seen as a cultural loss associated with farm work. Additionally, different family members may have different shifts resulting in a loss of total family time (i.e., when the whole family is together). In a study of migrant workers in Michigan, the average amount of time workers spent with their family was only 1 hour per week.



Urban League
of Portland

Empowering Communities. Changing Lives.

Overtime pay would allow farmworkers to spend more time with their families or tend to other responsibilities, instead of spending most of their life at work.

In closing, farmworkers are essential workers deserving of overtime pay. Equal is equal regardless of type of employment. Farmworkers deserve dignity, respect, and labor rights. For too long, they have been denied rights other workers have been afforded. We urge you to end the long-standing racist exclusion of farmworkers from overtime protections as soon as possible.

Respectfully,

Jennifer Parrish Taylor
Director of Advocacy and Public Policy
Urban League of Portland
Portland, OR 97227
Phone: 503.280.2600 ext. 609
Fax: 503.281.2612