

Submitter: Tom Harbolt

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Business and Labor

Measure: HB4002

Farm labor is extraordinarily seasonal. There are long hours during parts of the year and not enough to keep everyone busy during other parts. Despite this seasonality we do everything we can to keep people employed year-round. We pay for health, dental and vision insurance and almost no one makes minimum wage. Any idea that the average Oregon farmworker is underpaid is simply not based in fact. If the legislature raises the potential annual cost of labor by removing the exemption to overtime pay, we will be left with two options, both of which will reduce our workers' take home pay. We will either eliminate all overtime and bring in additional works or contractor workers to take up the hours our full-time employees used to work, or we will be forced to pay overtime during busy times and we will lay people off during the slow times. We are not able to simply pass through increased labor costs to our customers. By and large we are price takers. This is another example of the Oregon legislature causing another unintended consequence. It appears that Oregon has neither a pro-business nor pro-farming agenda. The legislature has increased minimum wages, wants to remove the exemption from overtime pay, wants to implement cap and trade, has further restricted water rights, taxes GROSS REVENUE, and adopts new costly workplace rules almost every year. These measures combined make it very difficult to remain competitive. The marketplace sets our pricing and almost every cost of our production. The legislature should not step in and artificially disrupt the pricing of one of our biggest costs. Our product is not unique. It can be purchased from other growers throughout the country, most of whom don't have to pay overtime. For all of these reasons, we oppose this bill.