

Submitter: Edgar Brandt

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Business and Labor

Measure: HB4002

My name is Rev. Edgar Brandt, and I live in Dallas, Oregon. I serve as a member of the Board of Directors of Farm Worker Ministry Northwest, a regional coalition of people of faith and religious organizations working for justice in the local farmworker community. Born and raised on a family farm in Oregon, I've been a farm labor advocate to improve wages and conditions since the late 1970's.

Oregon farmworkers, like their counterparts in California and Washington, need overtime pay. It is time to include all farmworkers in overtime pay protection since they were left out of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938.

Since the early 2000's I've served as a volunteer interpreter at a free mobile dental clinic in Salem. On a monthly basis I observe acute dental needs of the farmworker community from lack of routine cleaning and treatment such as fillings. Why? Farmworkers earning an average of \$25-\$30K per year must work to feed their families and cannot afford regular dental care. Overtime pay would help correct this reality.

From 1981 through 2008 I worked as a bilingual educator with Salem-Keizer Schools and found that it was especially difficult to connect with farmworker parents because they worked long hours, could not attend parent-teacher conferences and did not have time to promote their children's education as they would have wanted. Why? They were working to clothe, feed and shelter their families. Overtime pay in the Oregon agricultural workplace is a step toward giving workers more time to be responsible family and community members.

The current pandemic and weather crises are showing how essential and skilled farmworkers are in Oregon. They keep working in spite of harmful, unhealthy and difficult labor conditions. My family and I eat well each day because farmworker families keep planting, harvesting, tending livestock and more. Overtime pay for farmworkers would be an economic boost to the farmworker community and the entire Oregon economy.

I urge the 2022 Oregon Legislature to pass Farmworker Overtime to make sure farmworkers in our state are paid a fair and living wage. Their labor is essential.

Sincerely,

Rev. Edgar Brandt

Member, Board of Directors
Farm Worker Ministry Northwest