

February 5th, 2022

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

My name is Dashiell Hock, and I am a student at Oregon State University, studying Environmental Economics and Policy and Food in Culture and Social Justice. I've spent most of my professional life in kitchens, on farms, and working for other food businesses. I volunteer at Ten Rivers Food Web, an organization aimed at providing all people with equal access to locally produced, nutritious, affordable, and culturally diverse foods on a non-emergency basis.

I am writing to you today in support of HB 4002, establishing overtime protections for all agricultural workers. I strongly support the passage of this bill and believe that it is a necessary and long overdue step in supporting economic equality and justice for Oregon's farmworkers, as well as their health and wellbeing.

When the Fair Labor Standards Act passed in 1938, establishing federal the federal minimum wage, child labor regulations, and overtime, farmworkers were excluded from these protections in a concession to southern Democrats who represented parts of the country with economies relying on the exploitation of poor, Black laborers. In 2022 (84 years later), we still do not have overtime protections for agricultural workers, (now predominantly Latino and/or Indigenous immigrants), but we have a chance to change that this legislative session with HB 4002.

I believe that overtime pay for farmworkers will have four main impacts:

1) Equality and Justice: Farmworkers are some of the lowest paid workers of any industry in the US, making an average of between \$15,000-17,500 annually. In many cases, farmworkers simply can't afford to miss a day of work despite a cornucopia of valid reasons, including COVID-19. Overtime pay for farmworkers gives them the same basic rights and guarantees of other workers around the country.

2) Health & Wellbeing: Farmworkers, especially seasonal and migrant workers, are disproportionately exposed to toxic chemicals and pesticides during their work. With global warming and climate change, we see farmworkers face additional hazardous elements such as wildfire smoke and extreme heat. During the heatwave last year, there were over 250 heat exposure complaints filed to OSHA between June 24th-28th alone. Given these facts, it is harrowing (but not surprising) that the average life expectancy of farmworkers in the US is 49 years old. Overtime pay, as it was designed to do when implemented originally, will reduce the risk of injury to farmworkers by reducing the frequency in which they work beyond reasonable physical limits, leading to better overall health outcomes.

3) Quality of Life: Overtime pay for farmworkers will limit the average number of hours they work each day, which are not uncommonly 12-16 hours during the season. This will result in more time for farmworkers to take care of other responsibilities, take care of their families, and rest. A

better work-life balance can help combat the stress and depression farmworkers face as a result of isolation and physical exhaustion common in the industry.

4) Economic Stability: Overtime pay for farmworkers will enable them to earn more income to support themselves and their families. Even if take home pay for some farmworkers is slightly reduced from working less hours (which seems unlikely given the nationwide agricultural labor shortage and necessity for skilled farmworkers during critical points in the season), the benefits of better health, wellness, and more time that farmworkers can choose how to spend will have a beneficial economic impact to Oregon in aggregate over time because we will see farmworkers living longer, more robust lives.

Overtime pay is about more than money; it is about dignity, it is about health, it is about equality, and it is about justice. Please vote yes on HB 4002.

Thank you,  
Dashiell Hock