



TO: House Committee on Business and Labor
FROM: Nancy Haque, Executive Director, Basic Rights Oregon
DATE: 2/8/2022
RE: Support for HB 4002

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

Basic Rights Oregon urges you to vote “yes” on House Bill 4002, Farmworker Overtime. Our organization is committed to lived equality for all LGBTQ2SIA+ Oregonians, with an emphasis on racial justice.

Oregon’s farmworkers play a necessary and skilled role in our state’s economy and culture. They ensure the health of our food systems, contribute to our world-renowned culinary scene, and facilitate the export of some of our iconic Oregon goods, from filberts to marionberries to hops. They do all this in exponentially difficult conditions: backbreaking labor, long hours, worsening extreme weather, a respiratory pandemic, migratory work patterns, poor air quality, exposure to pesticides, and more.

In turn, they receive low wages—\$15,000 to \$17,499 a year on average, according to the National Agricultural Workers Survey—and are denied overtime pay thanks to a Jim Crow-era racist law.

The national Fair Labor Standards Act in Agriculture exempts farmworkers from overtime pay, meaning employers can force farmworkers to work long hours without the extra pay guaranteed in virtually any other industry. This law passed at a time when most of America’s farmworkers were Black, in an effort to maintain the economic power structure. Now, the majority of farmworkers are Latinx immigrants, and the same structural inequality persists.

HB 4002 would change that by requiring overtime pay for Oregon’s farmworkers. It’s simple: Farmworkers deserve equal pay for equal work, just as all Oregon workers do. Additionally, passing this bill will keep Oregon from falling behind economically, as both Oregon and Washington now have similar laws on the books. And with increased income that reflects their workload, farmworkers will be able to spend more money where they work and live, benefitting Oregon’s rural communities.

Our farmworkers risk their lives each day to perform necessary labor that benefits each and every Oregonian. They deserve basic dignity and respect, which is why we urge you to vote “yes” on HB 4002.

Thank you.