



February 7, 2022

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

My name is Betsy Zucker, and I represent the Health Care Committee of Portland Jobs with Justice. Portland Jobs with Justice is a coalition of over 100 labor, faith, community and student organizations and individual activists taking action for workers rights and economic justice, especially with those most marginalized by our economic system. Our health care committee supports a decent standard of living for all workers, including their health and safety. Personally, I am a retired family nurse practitioner, with many years providing direct patient care.

We are in full support of overtime pay for farmworkers. This bill will implement overtime pay to agricultural workers after 40 hours in a workweek, joining California and Washington in doing so. However, we are concerned about the long implementation timeline, and urge that this be shortened.

Our support for this bill is based on justice and equity for farmworkers. Farmworkers clearly deserve the same rights as all other workers. They have been unfairly excluded from overtime pay, as well as other employment protections, for decades. Farmworkers are underpaid, with individuals estimated to earn between \$15,000 and \$17,499 annually ([National Agricultural Workers Survey](#)). Providing eligibility for overtime pay after 40 hours a week will help create economic stability for these workers.

We are also tremendously concerned about the particular health issues for farmworkers, issues which we believe that passage of this bill will begin to alleviate. Overtime pay law was created to discourage employers from overworking employees.

Farmworkers are exposed to exceptionally dangerous occupational health and safety risks. They perform difficult, physically demanding and often unsafe work - sometimes working for up to 16 hours. They frequently work in conditions where they are exposed to many hours of toxic exposures, excessive heat and poor air quality. According to the [National Center for Farmworker Health](#), farmworkers “face workplace hazards similar to those found in other industrial settings, such as working with heavy machinery and hard physical labor. They also face unique occupational hazards specific to farm work, including pesticide exposure, skin disorders,

infectious diseases, respiratory problems, hearing and vision disorders, and musculoskeletal injuries.”

Because of the time-sensitive nature of farm work, these workers are also at very high risk of adverse health effects from prolonged exposure to extreme heat and wildfire smoke. And these exposures occur to farmworkers who already experience higher rates of many underlying chronic health problems, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease and cancer than most other Oregonians. Eligibility for overtime pay is especially important for these workers.

Providing overtime pay for farmworkers would improve health and safety, and help improve overall quality of life.

For all these reasons, we support overtime for farmworkers, and urge its implementation as soon as possible.

Respectfully submitted,

Betsy L. Zucker, MSN, RN-E
Chair, Portland Jobs with Justice Health Care Committee