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2/7/2022

To: House Committee on Business and Labor

Re: Support for Farmworker Overtime

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

My name is Sarah Kleeger, and I am writing on behalf of myself and my farm, Adaptive Seeds. We grow and sell specialty seed crops just outside of Sweet Home.

I am writing to you today in support of farmworker overtime. Farmworkers should receive overtime pay after 40 hours in a workweek at one and one-half times the employee's regular rate of pay. As a farmer I know this will impact agriculture as a whole in Oregon, but it is our responsibility to move our sector forward.

As the managing owner of a small farm in rural Linn County that employs four full-time, year-round employees in addition to part-time and seasonal workers, I know the high cost of farm labor first-hand, and I know how difficult it can be for farms to make ends meet. But farmers absolutely should not be depending on underpaid labor to make ends meet or turn a profit. Everyone deserves a work-life balance, and for this reason we strive to minimize overtime here on our farm. Should this law pass, my business will adapt by hiring more workers, by increasing our mechanization, and/or by adding more funds to our labor budget for the workers we already have.

Agriculture in the US has a long and shameful legacy of being built on the backs of unpaid and underpaid workers. Farmworkers being excluded from overtime pay perpetuates this unjust legacy. Agricultural labor is both highly skilled and highly strenuous, and farmworkers deserve to be fairly compensated for their efforts. Fair compensation includes overtime pay consistent with other industries.

Oregon should be a leader in providing overtime pay for agricultural workers. I urge you to pass farmworker overtime in the 2022 Legislative Session to ensure farmworkers in Oregon are paid fairly for their skilled and essential labor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Kleeger". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Sarah Kleeger

Managing Owner, Adaptive Seeds