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On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Business and Labor

Measure: HB4002

Farmworkers play an integral role in our state and national food production. Tens of thousands of farmworkers in Oregon provide food security for Oregonians through the extreme heat, wildfire and drought conditions that now frequent the state. Despite dangerous climate conditions, farmworkers often do not have the financial stability to miss a day of work, and many do not have health insurance to combat illness from extreme climate conditions. Clearly the conditions of the environment are a factor when it comes to this work, when the conditions are right, harvesting, planting, etc. must be done. However, farmworkers are currently exempted from a fundamental workplace right while workplace conditions deteriorate with the changing climate. They put food on our table and they need to be able to put food on their own.

Routinely working overtime exacerbates physical and psychological ailments that can lead to an increased risk of work related injuries and mental illness. As the climate crisis worsens, farmworkers are required to work long hours during peak periods of extreme heat and smoke pollution that can be detrimental to their health. The exemption of farmworkers from the Fair Labor Standards Act is a racist legacy that prohibits farmworkers, who are predominantly from Latin American and Indigenous, from receiving overtime pay. The racial and economic injustices that farmworkers face are exacerbated by the climate crisis, making this a pressing environmental justice issue that cannot be ignored.

Farmworkers should be entitled to over time pay under the Fair Labor Standards Act to compensate them for providing food security during times of crisis, and to help protect them from the physical and psychological harm that stems from their economic injustices. HB 4002 would ensure that farmworkers could not be asked to work excess hours without compensation. The demands on the time and health of farmworkers will continue to increase as the climate crisis worsens, and they must be fairly compensated for their role in ensuring food production within Oregon. We must demonstrate our support for farmworkers right to economic and environmental justice, and for all workers in Oregon.