



February 7, 2022

Representative Paul Holvey, Chair
House Committee on Business and Labor

RE: HB 4002 - SUPPORT

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

The Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization that advances innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations. Climate Solutions is a regional non-profit working to accelerate clean energy solutions to the climate crisis. **On behalf of our thousands of members statewide, we urge you to support HB 4002, which will extend overtime pay to farmworkers in Oregon.**

In recent years, Oregon has unwantedly become the poster child for climate change, making international headlines for our deadly and devastating climate-fueled heat waves and wildfires. People across Oregon have seen and experienced first hand the climate disasters that have ravaged our state in recent summers, and these ever-worsening impacts have only compounded our ongoing public health crisis: Exposure to wildfire smoke and excessive heat have serious, lasting health impacts, including increased risk of respiratory and cardiovascular disease, kidney failure, heat stroke, or even death.

Our farmworkers bear the brunt of these impacts. This past summer, extreme heat killed a migrant farmworker named Sebastian Francisco Perez, who died alone while laying irrigation pipes at a farm in St. Paul. Yet, despite being an essential part of our workforce on the frontlines of the climate crisis, farmworkers have been excluded from overtime pay since 1938. They are expected to show up for work in hazardous climate conditions, but remain one of the lowest paid workers in the country.

The exclusion of overtime pay for farmworkers is a clear example of racial and climate injustice. The exclusion has roots in Jim Crow Era Laws: the Fair Labor Standards Act excluded farmworkers and domestic workers from overtime pay, as well as minimum wage and child labor regulations. Today, the majority of Oregon farmworkers are immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean. Excluding Farmworkers from overtime pay was wrong in 1938, and is wrong today.

The legislature has an opportunity to right this historic wrong by supporting and passing HB 4002, which will ensure that farmworkers in Oregon receive overtime pay after 40 hours in a work week at one and one-half times the employee's regular rate of pay. Farmworkers are not second-class workers and deserve the same dignity, respect and labor rights as all workers.

We urge you to ensure farmworkers in Oregon are paid fairly for their skilled and essential labor by voting YES on HB 4002.

Sincerely,

Nora Apter
Climate Program Director
Oregon Environmental Council

Greer Ryan
Clean Buildings Policy Manager
Climate Solutions