

**To: Oregon House Committee on Business and Labor**

**Re: Testimony regarding HB 4002**

February 7, 2022

My name is Stephen Hunt. I own and operate a 100-acre pear orchard in the Hood River Valley of Oregon.

The pear industry is a globally competitive industry. Thirty percent of the US pear crop is exported. Many of our direct competitors - Argentina, Chile, and South Africa to name a few - have vastly lower labor costs than the US industry.

Oregon presently has the fifth highest minimum wage in the United States. In the pear industry in the Hood River Valley, it is common that housing, electricity, propane, water, and garbage services are provided as a benefit to employees. During harvest, piece rate wages are approximately double the normal hourly wage. This harvest period typically lasts for two to two and a half months in the fall. The argument that our agricultural workers are underpaid simply doesn't hold water.

Oregon agriculture produces a living, breathing, growing product. This product does not recognize the days of the week, nor track an 8-hour workday. They are seasonal crops, are weather dependent and demand inputs not on a calendar or work-week basis. There are many months when it is difficult, if not impossible to confine the needed work to a 5-day work window. However, it should be kept in mind, there is little to no work for employees for several months each year. It is simply an enterprise not suited for an overtime pay policy protocol. The extra expense of paying time and a half for over 40 hours by 2027 is such a big payroll burden that it's hard to imagine that any farmer would do that. The actual result would be that production would be constrained to a 40-hour work week, and hence, agricultural workers would earn less, farmers would produce lower quality and less valuable commodities, and Oregon agriculture would be less competitive. It is inconceivable that this is in the best interest of either the workers, farmers, or the State of Oregon.

If overtime legislation is enacted, it should allow a seasonality provision when weather, harvest windows and the needs of animals and crops dictate longer or unpredictable hours.

In closing, Oregon does not have agricultural wage unfairness. Agricultural workers in the State are paid well, housed well, and treated with respect and dignity. Imposing an overtime wage policy on an industry that is clearly unsuited to this kind of work protocol is damaging to the farmers, the workers and the economy of the State of Oregon. I urge you to exempt agriculture from any overtime wage policy.

Thank you

Stephen Hunt

1150 Jasper Lane  
Mosier, OR 97040  
(541) 806-2297  
stephenhhi@gmail.com