

House bill 4002 will hurt family farms

If passed, HB 4002 will not only hurt the sustainability of our 100-year-old small family farm operation but also severely impact the livelihood of our farmworkers who rely on us for their income. The economic conditions of the last 18 months have already posed significant business challenges that have increased costs and made maintaining profitable operations difficult. Mandatory overtime for farmworkers will only make this more difficult, and will now also force us to reduce farmworker hours to mitigate cost. Reduction of farmworker hours means reduced take home pay for workers, which poses significant worker retention issues—a challenge not easily rectified in today's tight labor market. Our team of farmworkers has been employed with us for more than 20 years—our crew's body of knowledge is critical to daily operations and not easily replaced. Reduced farmworker hours also means less harvest time and less maintenance work on the farm, which creates unnecessary waste from unharvested produce, lost profits, and other unforeseen issues—all of which leads to increased retail prices. Rising gas prices and taxes have already forced increased retail prices; our customer base will only tolerate so many increases when larger farms can offer more competitive pricing. How much do you think customers are willing to pay for local fruits and vegetables?

Our farm, like most family farms, generates just enough revenue to pay the bills and employ a dozen or so people. We hope to just break even at the end of the year. If HB 4002 is passed, we will be forced to cut back our farmworker hours and bear the consequences. Please consider the contributions of small family farms like ours and the devastating impact HB 4002 will have. Do not pass HB 4002.

Thank you, Cynthia Aspinwall
