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## **HB4002 Opposition**

We farm in both Gilliam and Morrow Counties. We grow dryland wheat and employ two to four individuals every year. These are people we care about and we do everything we can to compensate our employees fairly. At least one hire every year is a high school student working to earn money for their college tuition and gain work experience skills.

We are extremely concerned about the impact that ag overtime would have on my farm and employees. As wheat farmers, we cannot increase the sale price of my crops when labor costs increase. Consumers in the global commodity market set our prices. Since we cannot pass on increased costs, we will be forced to limit the number of hours that employees work to 40 hours per week to avoid the added expense of overtime pay. The other unintended consequences of this legislation for employees will be not being able to move ahead in their own financial position. If employers must limit the work week, employees will obviously earn less than they have in the past. In a community where the agricultural industry plays such a strong role, this will be detrimental.

As a family business, we can't operate at a loss year-over-year. Mandating overtime after 40-hours demands wages that are not possible with the economics of agriculture and will result in reduced pay and opportunities for farm employees. My husband and I actively manage our farmland to ensure it produces quality grain and sustains the health of the environment and soil. This work can be labor-intensive, particularly during seasonal periods like planting and harvesting. This bill will likely cost us nearly \$10,000 in new labor costs that we can't afford.

Farmers have been clear about the consequences of this policy, but we are also worried that farm employees will see their paychecks reduced or jobs cut if overtime pay is required after 40-hours. We work hard to provide additional benefits to our employees like a vehicle to drive and meat for their freezer as two examples. Our employees are our friends and neighbors; people we care about and consider family.

Only seven states have adopted ag overtime policies, and most have crafted policies to ensure some measure of flexibility to ensure that local farms can remain viable and that employees' jobs and paychecks are protected. Several states have adopted policies to meet seasonal needs and others established higher overtime

thresholds that help avoid some of the worst consequences. Failure to provide flexibility that acknowledges the needs for agricultural production risks the sustainability of thousands of family farms, ranches, and crop production and places farmworkers at a disadvantage, having the opposite effect of what is intended.

We urge you to oppose HB 4002 as written which would create an inflexible 40-hour overtime mandate that simply won't work for Oregon's farms.

Sincerely,

Deacon & Erin Heideman  
Blown Away Ranch  
Ione, OR