

2/7/2022

To: House Committee on Business and Labor
From: Joaquin, OR Farm Worker
Re: Support for Farmworker Overtime

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

My name is Joaquin and I live in Boardman Oregon. I have worked in agriculture in the US since 1995 and I currently work in the fields in Oregon harvesting potatoes, onions, and blueberries as well as other crops.

My regular schedule is 60 hours a week, however during harvest seasons, I sometimes work up to 12-16 hours in a single day and often times work for weeks without a day off.

Working long hours in extreme conditions like heat, snow, and wildfire smoke is dangerous. I have seen workers get sick and pass out in the fields and I have been so fatigued at times that I can barely stand up. Working for long hours in the heat sometimes makes you so sick that you have nausea and pain in your stomach, but even then we have to keep forcing our bodies to harvest the crops. We can't afford to slow down.

Many farm workers have chronic pain, back problems, and other injuries from working in the fields for extended periods. We have all sacrificed so much.

We are essential workers and we don't have the luxury of staying home. We have to come to work every day not only to feed our own families, but to keep families across the country fed. Wages are low in the fields and we often can barely cover our bills and keep food on our own tables.

We do really hard work in really harsh conditions and we deserve overtime pay, just like everyone else. Right now, without this protection, we are sacrificing our rest, our health, and our precious time with our families in order to barely keep our lights on in our homes.

I have missed out on so many important, and irreplaceable moments with my children because I have to spend so much of my time working. We often miss out on holidays, and special occasions. My kids play soccer and I have rarely ever been able to attend a game because I work all day including weekends. The worst part for me is leaving before my kids wake up and getting home when they are already in bed. It's time I will never get back with my kids.

There are mothers who leave their kids 6-7 days a week with a babysitter. It is a really difficult choice to make and it causes a lot of guilt and sadness for them. These kids have to grow up at a young age because their parents have to work so much.

Even though we provide so much for our communities, we are not treated as equals in Oregon. WA and CA have passed overtime legislation for farm workers that has undone this inequality. However in Oregon we still have no relief.

Our time, our health, and our families are valuable and growers should not have unlimited access to use us as tools. We deserve the dignity of being protected from this type of abuse and being afforded the same benefits and protections as other workers.

Please pass farm worker Overtime this year to protect the men and women who feed the great state of Oregon and the entire country.

ATTN: Joaquin
Farm Worker, Boardman OR