

Submitter: Andrea Gonzalez

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Business and Labor

Measure: HB4002

I am an Oregon resident and service provider to families in agricultural work. As a social worker and service provider, I would like to share my support of HB 4002, which would guarantee overtime pay for farmworkers. Farmworkers are essential workers and have been putting their health at risk as they work through heat waves, smoke from wildfires, and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. They are not being adequately compensated for the long hours they work week after week. Often during peak work season they are forced to work extremely long hours, affecting the time they have with their family. Children of farmworkers are impacted by their parents' exclusion in overtime laws and labor protection. As a social worker, I believe that everyone should be able to have the time for rest, recovery, to address health needs, spend time with family, and engage in their community. Most of all I believe it is unjust to continue excluding farmworkers from such basic labor protections, all due to the shameful and racist decision to exclude farmworkers from the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938. There is no justification to continue this racist exclusion that initially targeted southern African American farm workers of the 1930s and continues impacting the mostly Latino farmworkers of today. Growing up as a child of agricultural workers, I remember the cramped and harsh living conditions we found ourselves in due to living in poverty. Over two decades later and I see the same conditions when working with the farmworker families I serve. As a granddaughter of multiple Bracero Program members, I am also tired of seeing our society exploit the farmworker community. It's a job with little to no employer-sponsored benefits, low-wages, and minimum labor protections. Oregon's food production and distribution system is anchored by migrant and seasonal agricultural workers, yet these essential workers are excluded from overtime pay. I believe that farmworkers deserve to be treated the same as all other workers. Extending overtime pay for Oregon's farmworkers is necessary to improve their economic security and decrease food insecurity. Throughout the pandemic, catastrophic fires and hazardous air quality levels, farmworkers continued to work to support Oregon's multibillion dollar agricultural industry and keep our food systems afloat. Oregon is behind other states in providing protections and overtime pay to the essential migrant and seasonal workers that our food system depends on. We need to pass Farmworker Overtime so we can all emerge stronger.