



Testimony on House Bill 4002

February 8, 2022

House Committee on Business and Labor

Russell Lum

Chair Holvey, Vice-Chairs Bonham and Grayber, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Russell Lum, I am a political organizer for Oregon Nurses Association. We represent 15,000 nurses — including RNs and advanced practice nurses — and allied health workers. I share with you today that Oregon Nurses Association and the Nurse Practitioners of Oregon urge passage of a robust farmworker overtime policy that gives workers time-and-a-half pay for hours worked beyond 40 hours/week.

Oregon nurses with fellow essential workers who are here asking the legislature for the overdue provision of what all other hourly workers have.

The reasoning is simple: Farmworkers have been left out of overtime pay provisions on account of being easier to exploit — and legal exclusions of agricultural work stand on long, white-supremacist, antiquated traditions. The call to make Oregon equitable for all who reside here, which ONA joins in making and working on, demands this exclusion of law be repaired, and without delay.

An Oregon law enshrining farmworkers' obtainment of overtime pay is also timely because farm labor is dangerous, prone to injury and infectious disease, and exposed to harsh weather and climatic emergencies, such as wildfire smoke. These outdoor workers show their commitment to their arduous jobs and put the livelihood of Oregonians and Oregon industry on their back, by going to work in, as has been so often the case, heat, smoke, and COVID-19 risk. The challenges to their health presented by their daily work must be paid back, in overtime pay and other ways. The health system (and our members, who are health professionals) need these workers healthy, and in the full sense of health, across many social determinants. Just as the food system does.

Equitable pay is an essential component of valuing the work of those so essential to our state and its agricultural system. Thank you for hearing Oregon nurses' and other sectors' voice on this. We support House Bill 4002, with urging that farmworkers get their fair overtime pay now. Thank you.