

Submitter: KARI OTT

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Business and Labor

Measure: HB4002

February 8, 2022

House Committee on Business and Labor

900 Court St NE

Salem, OR 97301

RE: HB 4002 – Support for Livestock Exemption in Ag Overtime Legislation

Chair Hovey and Members of the Committee,

My Name is Kari Ott and I am a cattle producer in Harney County Oregon. I am writing to urge your consideration of a livestock exemption to HB 4002. The cattle industry is like no other sector of ag in Oregon where cattle are born around the clock during the calving season and require active management at all hours in every season. There are days such as last night where my husband, three girls and I were out until midnight trying to save a calf and cow when the calf was coming upside down.

Ranch employees have a very different situation than some other ag workers. Usually, employees get to live in a ranch house and for the most part power and other utilities are paid by the ranch. Also, many employees receive beef to feed their families. These are benefits not included in the wage rate of the employee.

Ranchers are unable to set the price for the cattle they raise to absorb increased regulatory costs. The economics of agriculture provide no other option except reducing labor to control costs by reducing worker hours to avoid accruing overtime; hiring a second shift to avoid accruing overtime; and moving operations outside of Oregon. These options are not favorable to the rancher with livestock dependent upon constant care and feeding. Shuttering a generational ranch due to excessive cost of production becomes top of mind with every added policy decision made by Legislators. The increased costs for labor will continue to increase the other cost inputs into the cattle operation. Hay prices are currently extremely high due to fertilizer and fuel prices. A labor cost increase will cause the hay prices to continue to increase which will be detrimental to cattle operations.

Without a livestock exemption to HB 4002 my business and other ranches will be

severely impacted, and ranches won't be able to continue to compensate the workers at the current rate of compensation. Livestock operations have unique needs and any policy changes should continue to recognize the challenges for producers and the workforce. Beef and Dairy Cattle, sheep and other livestock rely on 24-hour supervision and response, requiring a flexible workforce year-round. During calving or lambing seasons, immediate care, regardless of time of day is essential for the health and safety of the animals.

Please protect Oregon livestock workers and include a livestock exemption in HB 4002.

Thank you,

Kari Ott
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