



February 8, 2022

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

My name is Karen, and I work with Adelante Mujeres and I currently live in Portland, Oregon. I work with a women-led organization that works alongside many farmworkers and their families. Thank you for taking the time to read this testimony. I am writing / testifying in support of Farmworker Overtime.

HB4002 guarantees overtime pay to agricultural workers after 40 hours in a workweek at one and one-half times the employee's regular pay rate. This bill includes farm workers paid by piece rate (how many crops they produce) or hourly. Oregon would join five other states (California, Washington, New York, Minnesota, Hawaii) with overtime pay for agricultural workers. This bill ends the racist exclusion of farmworkers from the Federal Labor Standards Act. Tax credits will support farmers through 2029, allowing employers to deduct 50% of overtime pay in 2023 and 2024, 35% in 2025 and 2026, and 20% in 2027 and 2028. It's crucial for both our farmers and farm workers to win. Farmworkers face the brunt of centuries of exploitative and racist policies, and this bill is the right thing to do to start undoing this harm.

I grew up in the South. I saw folks in my community work endless hours with very little pay as farmworkers; this issue is near and dear to my heart. As housing costs rise in the middle of a global pandemic, farmworkers consistently get the short end of the stick and need your support. In the last year, I started volunteering at an immigrant mutual aid. Every few weeks or so, I witness farmworkers travel up to an hour and a half to pick up food boxes to feed their families because their wages weren't enough. You would think farmworkers would be able to afford the same food they pick, sadly that's far from the reality. Sometimes farmworkers ask for 2-3 extra boxes to drop off to other families. There's a real need, and we can start addressing this need by making sure farmworkers have the same employment rights as other full-time workers.

I live in Representative Jami Cate's district. I kindly ask my legislator and the committee to support this bill. Something needs to be done to ensure farmworkers get adequately compensated for their labor. The survival of their families and the long-term well-being of their children is at stake. It's important to support the farmworker communities to ensure that food is on all our tables. Most of these workers and their families do not have healthcare coverage through their employers. As a result, migrant and seasonal farmworkers experience higher rates of specific health problems such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and cancer than most other Oregonians. Overtime pay is long overdue and is based on the racist legacy of excluding agricultural workers from overtime pay in the Federal Labor Standards Act to maintain social and economic control of these workers.



Farmworkers are frontline workers who continue to show up despite facing a respiratory pandemic, wildfires, and, more recently, a winter storm. Agricultural workers deserve to be paid fairly for their labor, and this committee has the opportunity to be on the right side of history. Farmworkers are underpaid and exploited for their cheap labor. According to the National Agricultural Workers Survey, individual farmworkers earn \$15,000 to \$17,499 a year, and families are estimated to make between \$20,000 and \$25,000 a year.¹

Their work is place-based and time-bound (due to crop harvest windows), which puts them at higher risk of adverse health effects from prolonged exposure to extreme heat and wildfire smoke. Wildfires often happen during peak harvesting season when workers can earn the most money and may be forced to choose between their health and putting food on their families' table.²

Oregonians recognize farmworkers as essential workers, deserving of overtime pay. Equal is equal regardless of the type of employment. According to OHA, an estimated 174,000 migrant and seasonal farmworkers and related family members contribute to Oregon's multi-billion dollar agricultural industry.³ This bill creates economic stability for a class of workers who historically and consistently are barred from basic labor standards such as minimum wage, collective bargaining rights, and overtime pay. With better wages, there will be increased consumer spending, especially in local businesses and rural communities.

I urge you to vote yes to ensure farmworkers in Oregon are adequately paid for their labor.

Sincerely,

*Karen
Adelante Mujeres*

¹ National Farm Worker Ministry: Low Wages <http://nfwm.org/farm-workers/farm-worker-issues/low-wages/>

² OHA, Climate and Health in Oregon 2020 Report, 21. <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/HEALTHYENVIRONMENTS/CLIMATECHANGE/Documents/2020/Climate%20and%20Health%20in%20Oregon%202020%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf>

³ OHA, Vital Role of Migrants in the State Economy. <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/HPA/HP-PCO/Pages/Migrant-Health.aspx#:~:text=An%20estimated%20174%2C000%20migrant%20and,multi%2Dbillion%20dollar%20agricultural%20industry.>