

Date: 2/8/2022

To: House Committee on Business and Labor

From: **Prof. Janet Lorenzen**

Re: Support for Farmworker Overtime

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

My name is **Professor Janet Lorenzen**, and I live in **Salem, OR** and teach at Willamette University in the Department of Sociology. **I am in strong support of farmworker overtime because I have learned a lot from Willamette University students who are the children of farmworkers in Oregon.**

Here's what I've learned from my students from farmworker families:

- Overtime pay would mean a lot to farmworker families. Sometimes \$100 or \$200 means the difference between staying in an apartment or being evicted.
- The average life expectancy of a farmworker is about 50 years. Asking farmworkers to sacrifice their health for our food system is unethical. Especially when they don't earn enough to access healthcare.
- The farmworker population is getting older. What will they retire on?
- In 1938 labor reform left Black domestic workers and farmworkers out of legislation for overtime pay.
- Farmworkers are always working and rarely see their family.
- Covid hit farmworkers and their families especially hard.

The historian and scholar Dr. Ibram Kendi argues that policies are either anti-racist or they are racist and there is no such thing as a non-racist policy that remains neutral in our system. The state should not double down on a business model based on racist exploitation.

How would you have voted in 1938? You have the chance now to change that decision!

Farmworkers should receive overtime pay after 40 hours in a workweek at one and one-half times the employee's regular rate of pay as soon as possible. **I strongly support the bill, but want a shorter timeline than 5 years. Now is the right time to make this change because essential workers should be paid more, that is a trend we've seen during Covid.**

Farmworkers deserve dignity, respect and labor rights. For too long they have been denied rights other workers have been afforded. Farmworkers should be able to spend more time with their families or tend to other responsibilities, instead of spending most of their life at work.

I urge you to pass farmworker overtime in the 2022 Legislative Session to ensure farmworkers in Oregon are paid fairly for their skilled and essential labor.

Sincerely,

Janet A. Lorenzen
Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Sociology
Willamette University