

Wednesday February 9th, 2022

RE: HB 4002

To Whom it May Concern:

My father started our family farm in the Willamette Valley over 50 years ago. He started out growing grass seed and our farm has now grown to include hazelnuts and blueberries. We have always tried to be on the top end of the pay scale with both hourly rate and benefits. Farming is hard work and we want to reward those who are willing be members of our team. We love our employees and many are like family to us.

It is my understanding that agriculture has been exempt from paying overtime due to the fact that we do not have control over the price that we are paid for the items that we produce, therefore we are not able to control our profit margins by raising our prices to cover increasing expenses. If we continue operating in the same fashion and have to pay overtime it will significantly raise our labor costs which are already one of the main expenses on our farm.

We are blessed to have had the opportunity given to us by my father to continue to grow and diversify the business that he started. Several of our children are also involved in our family business. If this bill passes and we have to start paying overtime it will cause us to make some significant changes in the way that we farm. Here are the options as we see them:

- Keep going as is and pay overtime which will increase the cost of labor for us equivalent to adding approximately 2 more employees which will in turn lower our profit margin enough to make our farm not a viable entity in many of the years. Farming is already a mixed bag in that in the good years you store up for the not good years. This will just make it that much harder to ever get ahead making the option of having to sell or downsize very realistic.
- Add more labor to keep all employees near the 40 hour mark so overtime will not need to be paid. This is easier said than done especially in this labor market where it doesn't matter what you pay as there is not anyone to hire! And the great employees that we have want to work the long hours. They may not stay if they can't work more than 40 hours. I have heard stories of workers leaving to go to other states that don't pay overtime so that they can work more and make more money.
- Innovate so you don't need as much labor. Not sure how much of this we could do so don't really think this is a viable option for us.

I guess I am in a very pessimistic mood today as I am feeling that an end to farming is coming near if legislations like this begin passing. I get very frustrated with law makers that don't understand why businesses need to make a profit. As a farmer I can't just simply ask for a raise when my expenses exceed my income. I have to tighten my belt and the belt of my family and let employees go and then when it is too much, selling the farm is the only option and that money will then go to pay the land off that had to be mortgaged during the down years just to pay the labor, equipment expenses, and raw inputs.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my concerns.

Sincerely,
Anne-Marie Tribbett
JB Nursery, Inc.