

Thank you, Chair Holvey and members of the committee for this chance to give testimony. I appreciate that you kept the hearing open past 9:00 pm last night to give more people a chance to speak. My name wasn't called but I listened to all of those who spoke. Here are the remarks that I had prepared:

My name is Joel Geier. I live in rural Benton County. I support House Bill 4002 and I urge you to pass it.

I grew up on dairy, beef, and grain farms in Minnesota. I spent my youth working both on our family's farm, and for neighbors. I know how hard this work is, and I also know how dangerous it can be.

Working long hours in summer heat, around fast-moving machinery, and with sharp tools, is a recipe for heat stroke, injuries, or worse.

*An addition to my prepared remarks: Rep. Cate asked us to address how reducing hours could benefit workers. I would like to emphasize the safety hazards that come from working overtime. Yes, it's long been a part of farming culture to put in those log hours, and to expect hourly workers to do the same, during harvest season and other times of year when there are "emergencies." Here is what I had already prepared to say.*

My father died bringing in our beef cattle when I was four years old. A few years later, I lost the uncle who had adopted me to a farming accident. We lost not just him but also our four-generation family farm.

Later my brother Hans had a nearly fatal crash, after he went to work for a bigger operator. During fall harvest he fell asleep on his way home from after driving combine more than 90 hours in a single week. He was lucky to crawl away with just a crushed vertebra and a broken leg.

*Afterword: Please think about this. You can never understand the impact on farm worker families unless you have experienced the aftermath of these kinds of accidents.*

I respect farm workers who do the hard work on Oregon farms. I see them working very long shifts, in hotter weather than I ever had to work in myself.

I strongly support their right to receive overtime pay. It's the least you can do to show respect for their work, to vote yes on this bill.

I understand why the big operators are against it. They've outsourced the hard and dangerous work. It will cut into their profits to pay fair wages for that work.

As usual, the big operators are trying to convince small farmers that this is their fight too. They're trying to scare consumers with threats about the cost of food.

I don't buy it, and neither should you. Please vote yes, to support fair wages for honest work. Thank you.