



To: Joint Committee on Farm Worker Overtime

From: Julia DeGraw, Oregon Conservation Network, and Oregon League of Conservation Voters

Date: 02/23/2022

RE: Support for HB 4002 – Farmworker overtime.

Dear Chairs Senator Taylor and Representative Holvey, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on HB 4002. On behalf of our thousands of members and supporters in Oregon, we would like to register the Oregon Conservation Network (OCN) and the Oregon League of Conservation Voters (OLCV) strong support to pass HB 4002 ensure farmworkers are eligible for overtime pay—something they have been historically denied since 1938.

The Oregon Conservation Network (OCN) is coordinated through the Oregon League of Conservation Voters (OLCV). OCN is a coalition of 37 not-for-profit organizations throughout the state, united to advocate for pro-conservation legislation and to fight policies that threaten our state's natural legacy. OCN is powered by tens of thousands of Oregonians who belong to their membership organizations. We work to promote policies that will ensure a better Oregon for our children – and to fight policies that do not.

We write in support of HB 4002 to guarantee overtime pay to agricultural workers.

OLCV supports HB 4002 because it guarantees overtime pay to agricultural workers after 40 hours in a workweek at one and one-half times the employee's regular rate of pay, including farmworkers who are paid by piece-rate (how many crops they produce) or hourly. Oregon legislators would be joining neighboring states California and Washington in passing this crucial pro-worker legislation that get farmworkers overtime pay after 40 hours in a work week.

It is past time that we act to ensure farmworkers are afforded the same rights available to a majority of other workers since the Federal Labor Standards Act of 1938. The fact that this has not yet happened is due to the racist legacy of excluding farm workers from the Federal Labor Standards Act for the purpose of maintaining the social and economic control of these people. People who were predominantly black at the time the act was passed and now a majority of whom are from Latin America have been systematically excluded from labor rights they deserve. OLCV is committed to dismantling racism in the State of Oregon and passing HB 4002 is a step in the right direction.

The COVID-19 global pandemic has taught us to stop taking things for granted, particularly to start recognizing and appropriately compensating our frontline workers. Farmworkers are the definition of a frontline worker—everyone has to eat. Through natural disasters like wildfire, ice storms, and an unprecedented heat dome vent, and through a deadly global pandemic, farmworkers unflinchingly show up to make sure there's food on our tables. Yet they are consistently underpaid while expected to work in these dangerous and even deadly conditions. To say the least, agricultural workers deserve to be paid fairly for their labor.

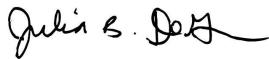
Farmworkers under the current system are deeply underpaid and exploited for their cheap labor. On average, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, individual farmworkers earn \$28,900 per year. We know that those wages are completely unacceptable in 2022. People cannot live in dignity on those wages.

Passing HB 4002 will help ensure the some 174,000 migrant and seasonal farmworkers, and relatives, that contribute greatly to Oreogn's multi-billion dollar agricultural industry can be paid more fairly for their labor. They are, in so many ways, the backbone of our agricultural industry and should be fairly compensated for their labor. Farmworkers deserve economic stability that has been denied to them by excluding them from basic labor standards such as minimum wage, collective bargaining rights, and overtime pay. We know that when working class people get increased pay that it will increase consumer spending, adding an additional boon to the local economy, particularly for local businesses and rural communities.

The same systems that exploit farmworkers are those that exploit the natural environment. We recognize at OLCV and at the Oregon Conservation Network that we have to fight all forms of exploitation and urge you to vote yes on HB 4002 to ensure farmworkers in Oregon are adequately paid for their labor.

We urge you to support HB 4002 to ensure farmworkers in Oregon have access to overtime—a right they have been denied for far too long.

Sincerely,



Julia B. DeGraw
Coalition Director
Oregon Conservation Network, and Oregon League of Conservation Voters

Testimony Submitted On behalf of all the OCN Member Organizations:

1000 Friends of Oregon, Association of Oregon Recyclers, Audubon Society of Portland, Beyond Toxics, Cascadia Wildlands, Center for Biological Diversity, Center for Food Safety, Central Oregon LandWatch, Climate Solutions, Defenders of Wildlife, Engineers for a Sustainable Future, The Environmental Center, Environment Oregon, Friends of Mount Hood, Friends of the Columbia Gorge, Greater Hells Canyon Council, League of Women Voters of Oregon, Native Fish Society, Neighbors for Clean Air, Oceana, Oregon Coast Alliance, Oregon Environmental Council, Oregon Land and Water Alliance, Oregon League of Conservation Voters, Oregon Natural Desert Association, Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility, Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition, Oregon Wild, Renewable Northwest, Rogue Riverkeeper, Sierra Club Oregon Chapter, The Street Trust, Surfrider Foundation, Trout Unlimited, Tualatin Riverkeepers, WaterWatch of Oregon, Wild Salmon Center