

February 23, 2022

Co-Chairs Taylor and Holvey, and Members of the Joint Committee on Farm Worker Overtime:

I am writing to convey my strong support for House Bill 4002A. I do so as a member of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) of Oregon and as part of the Ashland AAUW Branch Public Policy team.

This bill would require that agricultural workers be paid for overtime work at a time-and-a-half wage rate—an obvious and simple request that would right a longstanding wrong. It calls for designating the work week at decreasing number of hours over the next few years, until it reaches a definition of 40 hours, the standard for most occupations. Tax credits would be available to agricultural businesses as this standard is phased in, to offset the transition.

As we have seen during the pandemic, farmworkers are clearly essential, frontline workers, yet they are not treated as such. 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. Most do not receive healthcare coverage from their employers.

Currently, farmworkers may perform up to 16 hours of labor a day, often in conditions of wildfire smoke, excessive heat, and pandemic challenges. They deserve a living wage, a more stable economic situation, and basic equity with other Oregon workers.

As a resident of the Rogue Valley, I have seen how disproportionately farmworkers were affected by last year's wildfires and how critical they have been to our area's recovery. They are a vital and crucial part of our valley's economy. And they deserve nothing less than equity and justice.

House Bill 4002A would be a step in the right direction, and I urge you to vote Yes on this bill.

Respectfully,

Mary Renaud
Member of Public Policy team
Ashland Branch, American Association of University Women of Oregon