

February 23, 2022

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

Testimony in Support for HB 4002A – overtime compensation for farm workers

For far too long farm workers have been treated as a liability not an asset. Now most are immigrants from Latin American and the Caribbean. Farm workers were excluded from the Fair Labor Standards Act in the 1930's due to racism issues with the US Congress forcing any hope of passage to exclude farm and domestic workers (mostly African Americans) from coverage.

Farm workers ironically are one of the lowest paid workers in the US despite being considered essential.

Overworking anybody, but particularly those engaged in hard physical labor, leads to injuries and other health issues as they work their bodies beyond their capacity to cope. Sleep issues arise, family time is compromised, proper hygiene and nutrition suffer as a person can simply do no more.

As a youth I worked in bean and berry fields as it was rather a "rite of passage." Ten hour days were not unusual, pay was minimal, sanitary facilities abysmal and of course there was travel time and perhaps expenses too. However, I was not supporting a family, nor cooking, cleaning and doing laundry and whatever else is required in a family unit. Let's have those who get food to our table be compensated properly – our lives do depend upon them.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments on HB 4002A.

Sincerely, Katherine Goodwin, Gresham Area Branch of the American Association of University Women