

February 24, 2022

To: House Committee on Business and Labor  
From: Eva Galvez, MD, Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center  
Re: Support for Farmworker Overtime

Chair Holvey, Vice Chairs Bonham and Grayber, and Members of the House Business and Labor Committee,

Greetings, my name is Dr. Galvez, I live in Portland, Oregon.

As a proud daughter of migrant and seasonal farmworkers and through my work as a physician at Virginia Garcia I have seen the devastating health effects caused by racially motivated inequities such as uncompensated overtime to farmworkers. This is why I support of farmworker overtime.

The physical, mental, and social impacts of uncompensated, mandated overtime to farmworker health are undeniable. Long hours of hard, physical labor often increase the risk of injuries, exposure to pesticides and infectious diseases such as COVID-19. In addition, long hours that are not paid, exacerbated by already low wages, create barriers to farmworkers seeking out medical care or being able to afford medications.

One patient who comes to mind is a farmworker that I diagnosed with diabetes four years ago. When he was first diagnosed, he was in the early stages of his diabetes. Due to long work hours, he was not able to get to our clinic for his medications or receive support for his diabetes. He did not have the resources to buy and prepare the healthy foods he needed to keep his disease under control. And as a result, he ended up with an amputation of his toe last spring.

I do not believe that farmworker overtime is a political or economic issue. It is a matter of health. For too long, the narrative has been that health is only about what happens in the doctor's office or the medications that you take. It is far more than that. Factors such as income, housing, employment, and lifestyle choices make the biggest difference of all. Good health choices are nearly impossible when you are forced to work long hours but do not receive the benefits or compensation for your work.

I realize that farmworker overtime is only one of many steps that must be taken in order to improve the health of farmworkers. Nonetheless, I believe that this it is a critical step. And so I urge you to pass farmworker overtime in this legislative session to ensure that everyone has the same access to the things that help us prosper.

Sincerely,

Eva M. Galvez, MD

