



February 24, 2022

To: Joint Committee on Farmworker Overtime  
From: Oregon Education Association  
Re: Support for HB 4002, Farmworker Overtime

Dear Co-Chairs Holvey and Taylor and members of the Joint Committee,

The Oregon Education Association represents over 41,000 educators and education service professionals across the state, from pre-k to community colleges. Our members are teachers, bus drivers, custodians, teacher assistants, nutrition specialists, community college professionals and more.

You may hear from some of these professionals at today's hearing.

OEA supports Farmworker Overtime, House Bill 4002.

Farmworkers should receive overtime pay after 40 hours in a work week at one and one-half times the employee's regular rate of pay as quickly as possible. HB 4002 is one step forward to addressing the inequity that exists in Oregon by supporting more economic stability to a class of workers who have been excluded from basic labor standards such as minimum wage, collective bargaining rights, and overtime pay.

It's no secret that our farmworker community often endure some of the toughest working conditions as is, but the pandemic has shown us how often unequipped and exposed to harsh working conditions they are without the ability that many of us have to work from home. We believe HB 4002, although a step in the right direction, is long overdue and in fact the five year phase-in period could and should be shorter.

Educators are passionate about making sure their students excel, however, when students from farmworker households experience economic instability as a result of the harsh realities faced by farmworkers, it effect a student's success. Whether it's housing instability, health impacts from pesticides or missing school to help support parents in the field, our students feel the impacts of what their farmworker parents bare.

As recently as last year, the University of Oregon released a study showcasing that the pandemic has hit Oregon farmworkers especially hard—one major quote stating, "The survey showed that farmworkers struggled with mental health challenges triggered by things like the loss of income, inability to pay bills, disruption of the financial help they send to relatives in their home communities, and difficulties providing education to children at home during the pandemic."<sup>1</sup>

Regardless of what industry management tell you, we know that farmworkers are some of the lowest paid workers in Oregon, and it's no surprise given the exclusion from worker protections laws since the 1930s.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://around.uoregon.edu/content/covid-19-has-hit-farmworkers-especially-hard-uo-studies-show>



There are many ways that we are dealing with the racial biases and wrong decisions of our past, whether through health care, education or economic stability. And although we can't change the past, we can make decisions today that impact our future.

We want an Oregon where farmworkers and their families have greater economic stability, and their families are supported and resourced--- this matters for our students, their educators, and support networks.

That's why OEA is supportive of HB 4002 and we encourage the committee's passage of this bill.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Michele Ruffin

Oregon Education Association