



Testimony on House Bill 4002

February 24, 2022

Joint Committee On Farm Worker Overtime

Russell Lum

Co-Chair Taylor, Co-Chair Holvey, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Russell Lum, I am a political organizer for Oregon Nurses Association. We represent 15,000 nurses — including RNs and advanced practice nurses — and allied health workers. I share with you today that Oregon Nurses Association and the Nurse Practitioners of Oregon urge the passage of HB 4002. While we believe the five-year transition period in HB 4002 is a long time for farmworkers to wait to be adequately compensated, the bill is a step forward. You have an opportunity which we hope you seize to pass a robust farmworker overtime policy that gives workers time-and-a-half pay for hours worked beyond 40 hours/week as quickly as possible.

Oregon nurses, with fellow essential workers, are asking the legislature that farmworkers receive the long-overdue inclusion of other workers have.

The reasoning is simple: Farmworkers have been left out of overtime pay provisions on account of being easier to exploit — and legal exclusions of agricultural work stand on long, white-supremacist, antiquated traditions. The call to make Oregon equitable for all who reside here, which ONA joins in making and working on, demands this exclusion of law be repaired, and without delay.

An Oregon law enshrining farmworkers' obtainment of overtime pay is also timely because farm labor is dangerous, prone to injury and infectious disease, and exposed to harsh weather and climatic emergencies, such as wildfire smoke. These outdoor workers show their commitment to their arduous jobs and put the livelihood of Oregonians and Oregon industry on their back, by going to work in, as has been so often the case, heat, smoke, and COVID-19 risk. The challenges to their health presented by their daily work must be paid back, in overtime pay and other ways. The health system (and our members, who are health professionals) need these workers healthy, and in the full sense of health, across many social determinants. Just as the food system does.

Equitable pay is an essential component of valuing the work of those so essential to our state and its agricultural system. Thank you for hearing Oregon nurses' and other sectors' voice on this. We support House Bill 4002, with urging that farmworkers get their fair overtime pay now. Thank you.