

Submitter: Tiffany Monroe
On Behalf Of: Oppose HB 4002
Committee: Joint Committee On Farm Worker Overtime
Measure: HB4002

My name is Tiffany Monroe, I reside in Junction City and farm in Lane and Benton Counties. In addition to farming, I work in the ag and natural resources industry, and have been involved in DEI work in agriculture and related sciences for over ten years.

As a Black woman and leader for DEI and environmental justice in Oregon, I am compelled to dismantle the inequities of this bills for farmers and especially farm workers. Ag overtime has been raised to champion justice, overcome racism, and bring equity and opportunity to our state and food system. I am here to tell you that ag overtime will do anything but that.

In this bill, no one wins.

Farmworkers will have less hours and farmers will have to cap hours, mechanize, or sell out. I also find it extremely troubling to provide false promises to farmworkers who have been led to believe that ag overtime will lead to more lucrative jobs and more fruitful lives.

Farming is extremely challenging. My credibility in this statement stems from my vast experience and expertise in ag. I have work in cooperative extension, for a state department of agriculture, for an agricultural lending institution, I am a multiple generational farmer, and recently started a small livestock operation.

My family farm puts farm workers first. Cumulatively, non-family members employees have nearly 100 years of experience on our family farm. Workers who began as migrant temporary employees have been on the farm for decades and choose to be there even in the toughest of times. We know we cannot pay high wages, our commodities, and tight margins simple won't allow it. Instead, we create compensation plan we can afford that often is funded out of our own pockets. Employees have paid lunch breaks, housing, stipends for cell phones and vehicle use, harvest bonus and end of year bonus. Our farm workers are put above hiring family members like myself. Despite what some may say, this model is not unique and if ag overtime is passed, we will not be able to provide this level of quality of life for employees.

We have done the math on ag overtime. We WILL have to have cap hours, rip out labor intensive crops, and worse mechanize as much as non-humanly possible if we want a chance to keep our 6th generation farm going.

I ask, have you considered Oregon's Black, Indigenous, People of Color who own

farms, ranches or businesses connected to the farming industry? Have you considered how ag overtime and other anti-agriculture bills will destroy our ability to own small agriculture businesses, be leaders in our community, build wealth, and change that game for ourselves and generations to come? I want to grow my farm and create a pipeline for BIPOC and vulnerable white residents to work on my farm as a springboard into the industry and learn leadership, business skills, entrepreneurship, and financial planning. But with ag overtime, my dream will never come true.

There are other black and brown entrepreneurs who would love to share their experiences as business owners and the challenges they face with regulatory burden and unintended consequences of legislation that weighs heavily on small business. But they are afraid, to come forth and speak their truth.

Despite the challenges of this bill, I believe in you, our chosen elected officials to put your minds and hearts together for all people in Oregon.

Please develop a compromise that protects farm workers and farm owners and operators. I specifically request seasonality and exemptions for animal operations like mine. I would rather take chances with BOLI than sit back and watch Oregon destroy farms, farm families and farm workers.