

February 24, 2022

To: Joint Committee on Farmworker Overtime

Re: Support for HB 4002-Farmworker Overtime

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

My name is Lee Pietruszewski, and I live in Newberg, OR and I am writing on behalf of myself and my students in Woodburn.

I am writing to you today in support of farmworker overtime. 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.

I am an educator in Woodburn School District, and I have both personal experience with labor and pay issues and experience serving youth whose lives are negatively impacted by unfair and unjust labor practices. My family has multiple union workers in it (my spouse, my sister who was a grocery worker, uncles who are firefighters and union carpenters, aunts who are union nurses, and both grandfathers who were members of multiple unions during their careers), and I am committed to maintaining the protections and benefits that they and thousands of others have fought and died for, regardless of the work a particular person is doing.

My students are part of this struggle, as well, as many of them live in the migrant-worker camps in Woodburn, and their daily lives are harder and less nourishing than they should be as the children of people who are working more than full-time hours every single week. Many of our students would not have reliable access to food if not for free breakfast and lunch programs in our schools, and that is directly tied to the suppressed wages of their family members who work in the fields, maintaining and harvesting the produce of the farms all over the area between my school in Woodburn and my home in Newberg. These families deserve dignity and respect for the essential work they have continued to do in dangerous conditions before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, and compensation for overtime work is an important facet of bringing that dignity and respect into tangible reality for my students and their families.

My students deserve to have lives without the deprivation they have experienced so far, and their

families deserve the same protections as any worker in the US, protections that both union members and aspiring union members have paid for with their health, their bodies, and too often with their very lives. Recently, I gave an assignment during a unit on the US Constitution and civics that included a question about what right they would choose to add as an amendment to the US Constitution, and multiple students responded with calls for a right guaranteeing fair wages for “field workers.” I was moved by this plea for appropriate value being assigned to the essential, difficult, physically taxing, and dangerous work their families are doing for more than 40 hours a week, the standard for a work week since 1593 in Europe and codified nationally in the US in the 1937 *Fair Labor Standards Act*. My students deserve to have their families compensated for their hard work, or, if employers cannot make such equitable treatment a reality, to have their family members home and available for all times outside of that 40 hours per week.

I urge you to vote Yes on HB 4002 to pass farmworker overtime, for my students and their families.

Sincerely,

Lee Pietruszewski

Classroom teacher in Woodburn, OR
Newberg, OR