

Submitter: Ryan Gilkerson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Farm Worker Overtime

Measure: HB4002

My name is Ryan and I am a 4th generation pear farmer in Hood River valley in Oregon. My fathers side were all family farmers as well as my mothers side. It has come to my attention and is my feeling that the legislators pushing for this bill to pass are doing so in bad faith. Farmers in this valley have striven to create and keep positive relationships with our employees and to hear that the principle arguments being delivered, Not to us farmers face to face(which is another issue), are that this bill is being pushed to help the employees get compensation from us racist, oppressive employers. I take extreme offense to this conjecture as my mothers side of the family is Japanese American and her family was put in internment camps during the war. We strive to be equal and work together with our employees so they do not feel like they are being oppressed such as our family was. We have employees that have been working on our farm for longer than I have been alive and we do all we can including free housing, free utilities and providing their families with a place in the valley that they feel comfortable in. We understand farming is hard work and we give to our employees when and where we can, but this overtime bill WILL be detrimental to our family operation. As pear farmers we are price takers, meaning we take what prices the retailers decide and we cannot simply raise our prices to adjust to this bill along with all other encroaching regulations and rules being forced upon us along with massively rising costs during this pandemic. Tax credits to help counter this simply won't work and are not the solution. Passing this bill will not only be the nail in the coffin for our 4th generation family farm, but it will be extremely detrimental to the employees that are being used as pawns in this political agenda in what seems to be an attack on the Ag community. Hours will be reduced across the board for employees and we as a good ethical business do not want that to happen to them. We truly feel like our employees are an extension of family and do not deserve to be pushed out of their jobs because we as employers can't afford to pay for overtime. On top of employees receiving less hours per week, farms will have to start charging rent and utilities for what is now free labor housing and this will put employees in an even worse situation. To top it all off, any meetings with farmers that have happened have been open to both sides. There was a meeting for people in favor of the overtime in Hood River where farmers were denied entry, along with an employee who was told to leave and they would not continue the meeting until the employee was gone, simply because that employee voiced opposition to this bill. How can we expect to be heard when no one is listening? It is time we stop letting the people in charge steamroll us for their own political gain at the expense of our employees and industry with lies and defamation of farmers. Please vote NO to HB4002 and lets move toward working together instead of against one another.