

Submitter: Julie Stuben  
On Behalf Of: Oppose HB 4002  
Committee: Joint Committee On Farm Worker Overtime  
Measure: HB4002

I am a 3rd generation orchardist in the Hood River Valley and utilize agricultural employees, many of whom come back to my farm year after year. I am concerned about the impact that HB 4002A, the ag overtime proposal, would have on my orchard and employees. I do everything I can to compensate employees fairly- including paying well over minimum wage and giving bonuses. But as a farmer, I am a price taker. This means that I cannot increase the sale price of my crops when labor costs increase. Consumers in the global commodity market set our prices. Any added costs will have to be absorbed by my family's farm. That's the economic reality for those of us in agriculture.

Oregon's specialty crops are labor intensive and have peak seasonal needs, including harvesting, pruning, and planting. This bill will likely cost me thousands in new labor costs that I can't afford. To remain in business, I will be forced to limit the number of hours that employees work to 40 hours per week. I'm concerned our farm employees will see their paychecks reduced or jobs cut if overtime pay is required after 40-hours.

As a family business, we can't operate at a loss year-over-year. Mandating overtime after 40-hours demands wages that are not possible with the economics of agriculture and will result in reduced pay and opportunities for farm employees. Only seven states have adopted ag overtime policies, and most have crafted policies that ensure that local farms can remain viable and that employees' jobs and paychecks are protected. Several states have adopted policies to meet seasonal needs and others established higher overtime thresholds that help avoid some of the worst consequences.

A tax credit is not a workable or durable solution to farmers paying for overtime. Tax credits will be phased out as soon as a recession hits, cannot be enacted in perpetuity, and, as crafted, phase down when growers will need them most. We need a workable and durable solution that can only be found by adjusting the structure of the overtime proposal to account for the seasonal and year-round needs of the agriculture industry. Please consider making compromises to include a seasonality provision of exempted weeks each year.

As someone who stands to lose their family business, I urge you to oppose an overtime mandate at 40-hours in HB 4002A. Please help us save agricultural jobs and family farmers - VOTE NO ON HB 4002A!