



Ben Verhoeven, President, Peoria Gardens, Inc.
Albany, Oregon
In Support of Overtime Pay for Agricultural workers
Thursday, February 24, 2022

Co-Chairs Taylor and Holvey, and Members of the Joint Committee on Farmworker Overtime:

Hello there. I'm Ben Verhoeven. I'm a second generation farmer. I run a family owned nursery in Albany, Oregon. My employees receive great benefits, including 12 weeks of paid parental leave, health care, 5 weeks of paid time off, a pension, and overtime, above 40 hours a week at time-and-a-half. I support overtime for all ag workers.

Spring is our harvest. As any farmer will tell you, you've got to make hay while the sun shines. To survive in business I need folks to stay until the job is done. For their families to thrive they need to be paid for their extra effort.

Other industries have peak seasons. We've recognized that their workers deserve overtime. Is it fair that a mother, working harvest on a farm, is denied overtime pay, while her son gets it driving an Amazon truck during the Christmas rush?

When it comes to finding and keeping workers, farms like ours compete against the Amazons of the world. Paying overtime levels the playing field.

Is labor a significant cost? Yes. When costs go up, can I raise my prices? Yes. Our market can both compensate its workforce, and keep farms like ours profitable.

Tax credits go a long ways toward defraying those costs. For the many farms like ours who already pay overtime it will actually be a windfall. We've been paying overtime already and now we will be eligible for reimbursement.

It is a balance of costs and fairness. I understand those costs. They come out of my pocket. I also understand the fairness that the hard work of agriculture, the work we have recognized as essential, should be compensated like any other job. Compensated with overtime, at time and a half.

Thank you.