

Submitter: Jeff Heater

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Farm Worker Overtime

Measure: HB4002

Hello,

My name is Jeff Heater from The Dalles in Wasco county. I oppose this bill as written on Ag Overtime due to the lack of flexibility forced onto most farming operations in Oregon. We will see large increases in already high labor costs due to passage of this bill in it's current form. I, like many other farmers in the state, will be forced to reduce my crews hours to not exceed the current 40 hour threshold as the only option to help keep my operating costs from skyrocketing. I have a apple and cherry orchard and labor accounted for 58% of my total costs in 2021. My full time 3 employees average over \$20/hr for the entire year. The larger harvest crew which can be as big as 85 workers averaged \$23.40/hr for their piece rate paychecks. I am looking into using H2A labor for the first time in my 26 years of farming. Last year's heat dome resulted in 20% of my crop left on the trees. Additionally with the lower prices received for the crop I did harvest, my farm lost over \$300,000 in 2021. Other states and countries have lower costs than us smaller family farms here in Oregon. We seem to feel like Oregon based agriculture is feeling a squeeze to leave the state or change what we are growing to be competitive with the rest of the world. It seems you folks do not care if Oregon agriculture matters! Farming is what made this state great and now I am losing hope in it's future.

I hope you hear at least a few of my words here.

Thank you

Jeff Heater