

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

My name is Britney VanCitters, and I live in the Lents neighborhood of Portland. While I do not have a lived experience or really a personal experience at all related to farmwork, I am deeply concerned about human rights and workplace safety for all Oregonians.

I am writing to you today in support of farmworker overtime (HB 4002). Farmworkers should receive overtime pay after 40 hours in a workweek at one and one-half times the employee's regular rate of pay. This basic right was afforded to workers in other industries through the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938. Sadly, farmworkers were intentionally excluded from this bill in order to earn the votes of Southern lawmakers who built economies that relied on the exploitation of Black laborers. This policy is remnant of America's racist past that continues to be perpetuated in Oregon, and it is time to right this historic wrong.

Extending overtime pay protections to farmworkers will create better health conditions and a longer life for farmworkers. Exclusion from overtime pay requires farmworkers to work many hours without having time to do other things. Farmworkers should be able to spend more time with their families or tend to other responsibilities, instead of spending most of their life at work. It is not just about time either. Because they are paid so little, farmworkers are unable to take time off from work when outside conditions are hazardous-- for example, when our skies are red from wildfire smoke, or when the outdoor temperature is 117°F. Farmworkers risk their own health, safety, and lives to make sure our pantries are stocked... the least our state can do is pay them a living wage.

Farmworkers are some of the lowest paid workers in Oregon with a median income of \$28,000 a year. Farmworkers who put food on our table should be able to put food on their own table and make enough money to do so. Farmworkers deserve dignity, respect and labor rights.

HB 4002 is a vital, must-pass bill this session. In addition to the rights it will afford to farmworkers, the policy also ensures that our farmers and growers are not overburdened with added expenses. There is a 5 year ramp-up period to reach the full time-and-a-half pay after 40-hours in a workweek, coupled with a tax credit to provide financial support to farmers and growers.

I urge you to vote YES on HB 4002 to pass farmworker overtime in the 2022 Legislative Session to ensure farmworkers in Oregon are paid fairly for their skilled and essential labor.

Sincerely,
Britney VanCitters
Lents - Portland, OR