

Submitter: Sarah Schartz

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Business and Labor

Measure: HB2722

Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee,

My husband and I own a small excavation company in Sutherlin, Oregon. Both of us received our tractor driving certificates when we were enrolled in the agriculture program at Glide High School and used that certification to work jobs well before we turned 18. It is an excellent exemption for the agricultural community. My husband did custom tractor work for many in the community with the school ag tractor as a part of his Supervised Agricultural Experience. That opportunity was critical in gaining him experience and giving him purpose. He later went to work in the construction industry, and we eventually started our own business.

Our own son has had a different experience. At the age my husband and I got our tractor driving licenses, our son also had the skill level, knowledge and responsibility to be able to come work with us, yet current labor laws do not allow for children under 18 to work construction, let alone operate equipment. This has been a frustration to our son as well as us. If we were able to take him to work with us, he would be supervised by people that care for his well-being and have a desire for him to learn the best and safest work practices.

I strongly believe that young men and women benefit from work – having expectations set in front of them and rising to those expectations. That is how people develop responsibility, work ethic and skills to take into the future. Are there inherent dangers associated with power-driven equipment? Absolutely. But good training and supervision can prevent accidents and mitigate dangers. The exemptions in agriculture have proven that young men and women under the age of 18 can responsibly and safely handle power driven equipment to great benefit to themselves and their families. Any changes that would expand those exemptions to other trades/industries would be greatly appreciated.

Sarah Schartz