



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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February 10, 2022

Oregon House Committee on Business and Labor
Chair Paul Holvey

Vice-Chairs Daniel Bonham and Dacia Grayber

(Submitted into public record via Committee Assistant Desi Root: desi.root@oregonlegislature.gov)

Chair Holvey, Vice-Chairs Bonham and Grayber, and Members of the Committee:

The Yamhill County Board of Commissioners encourages a compromise on House Bill 4002 that will not unduly burden Oregon's family farms.

While overtime pay is not a damaging policy in and of itself, currently farm workers are exempt from overtime pay due to the nature of farming being seasonal and temporary. Agricultural employees don't work traditional 8-5 hours, and very few states have enacted mandatory overtime laws because of this.

House Bill 4002 would phase in mandatory Ag overtime pay in Oregon with taxpayers covering half the cost in the first years and continuing to pay portions of the cost until fully implemented. While a staggered approach may seem beneficial, it simply delays the inevitable harm the policy will cause to our family-owned farms.

Previous attempts to mandate Ag overtime failed in large part because Oregon grows over 225 different commodities and every farm has different growing conditions, staffing needs, and ability to provide employment benefits. Oregon's 36,000 family farms have seen labor costs nearly double in the last decade, with farm worker pay outpacing minimum wage rates at a spread of \$20-32/hour. Couple that with Oregon's punitive tax and regulatory burdens on businesses in general, and this policy would have an immediate, negative impact.

In Yamhill County, our farmers fear hundreds of thousands of dollars in additional labor expenses, which would necessitate eliminating other benefits offered to employees like healthcare plans and bonuses. Farmers that have testified that they can raise prices as a result of this policy are selling directly into retail markets, not wholesale markets that have fixed price points.

Other states that have passed this type of legislation have seen workers' hours capped, a rapid shift to mechanization, and a decrease in growing labor-intensive crops. Putting Oregon's farmers at significant risk with a one-size-fits-all state mandate is the wrong solution and harms the very people it is intended to help.

We are extremely concerned that a policy designed to transform an entire industry is being rapidly pushed through a short special session, with very limited time offered for public testimony. Yamhill County's farming families deserve better representation than that. We urge you to seek a compromise on HB 4002 that has the support of our agricultural industry and the thousands of family farmers they represent.

Respectfully,


Lindsay Berschauer
Chair

Voted "No"

Casey Kulla
Vice-Chair


Mary Starrett
Commissioner

Accepted by Yamhill County
Board of Commissioners on
2-10-2022 by Board Order
22-37