



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

March 1st, 2022

To: Chief Clerk Sekerak

Re: Vote Explanation on House Bill 4002B

Chief Clerk Sekerak,

I supported the passage of HB 4002B because I believe in equality under the law. I believe the value of human beings to be equal; I believe that the value of labor must also be equal.

House Bill 4002B, as drafted, is imperfect. It reflects the best intentions of many. However, I will always believe it could have been made a little better, a little more robust, and more effective for all interests if more of us representing so-called “Purple” or “Swing” districts were allowed to take part in the negotiations. I have learned that sometimes, in this Building, the best solutions are prohibited from negotiations because of the intransigence of respective advocates. I suspect this is the case here today. To be clear, I still believe credit should be given to employers that provide safe housing. I still believe a five-week period, rather than a twenty-two-week period, of flexibility for harvest and/or weather-oriented harvest requirements could have been fairly negotiated, and I still believe we could have implemented a timeline aligned with our previous minimum wage could have provided employees and employers with added time for adjusting to a new reality.

House Bill 4002B is not the bill I had hoped for, but it moves us in the right direction: closer to the values we claim and the Union, we are bound to improve. I voted in support of HB 4002B because it represents progress. It will establish now and forever the equality of human labor under the law in all economic sectors. Over time, I believe HB 4002B will do more good than harm, but I suspect it will not fulfill the hopes of the advocates. It will not likely translate into significantly increased incomes for most agricultural workers – employers, especially the good ones, will find other ways to survive – as they must. For good or ill, we are not fortune-tellers. We are here, now.

Today I voted in support of this measure because it is my duty to make the best choice from among the available options before us. I believe when an injustice is put before us, we must act – we have no other alternative – we cannot sweep inconvenient realities under the rug. The fact is about eighty years ago; a decision was made to build the original sin of racism into the economic ecosystem of American Agriculture. If I could, I would go back in time and fix it. I would fight for a structure and system that recognizes the value of human life – a standard that secured equal importance for the labor of all. I do not have the ability. I do not have the power to wave a wand and start fresh as if the agriculture ecosystem hadn’t evolved into a global marketplace with certain and specific realities. I can’t do that, but I did vote today for ensuring that a full week of work is equal to a full week of work for all people. I believe in the aspiration of America as a place where all people are equal under the law- where all people are valued equally. As Euclid postulated in his Common Notions, “Things which equal to the same thing also equal each other.” I urge a yes vote.

Sincerely

Representative Paul Evans
State Representative – Oregon House District 20