



Standing for dignity in the workplace

Testimony in Opposition to of HB 2675
January 23, 2023

Chair Holvey, Vice Chairs Elmer and Sosa, Members of the Committee,

My name is Kate Suisman. I am an attorney at the Northwest Workers' Justice Project. We represent workers in low-wage jobs when bad things happen to them at work, like when they are not paid or are discriminated against for being in a protected class or retaliated against for speaking up. We also engage in policy advocacy and try to bring the important perspectives of workers in low-wage jobs and immigrant workers to these policy discussions.

As to the bill you are hearing today, we are strongly opposed, both because of process concerns and substantive ones.

In terms of process, Oregon OSHA regulates agricultural labor housing, and has been engaged in a comprehensive rulemaking on the subject for the past few years with a wide range of stakeholders. That rulemaking discussion is the proper place for an idea like this to be vetted.

Second, in terms of the substance of the bill, it seems to weaken farmworker housing standards rather than improve them. Farmworker housing runs the gamut from very good and modern to extremely poor and substandard housing. This bill seems to aim to allow structures meant for housing human beings to be exempted from building codes, which seems dangerous and unwise. It also seems to treat the structures like animal housing, the implications of which I do not need to get into.

Thank you for listening to me.