



February 18, 2025

Chair Taylor, Vice-Chair Bonham, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ira Cuello-Martinez and I am the Policy Advocacy Director at PCUN, Oregon's Farmworker Union. PCUN aims to empower farmworkers and working Latinx families to improve their working conditions through community building, organizing, and policy advocacy.

On behalf of our members, I am testifying in opposition to SB 622 which would exempt employers from contributing to unemployment taxes on the wages of workers on H-2A visas.

The H-2A program is a federal program that allows employers to ask the federal government to issue visas for foreign workers. These workers perform temporary, agricultural work only for a particular employer, and only if doing so does not displace local workers or degrade local jobs.

Unfortunately, the current H-2A system is flawed and fails to adequately ensure that federal requirements are met, hurting both Oregon workers and employers. Employers have a high level of control over temporary foreign workers under the current program and enforcement resources and mechanisms are minimal, inviting widespread violation of H-2A regulations and other workplace protections.

We are concerned that this exemption will incentivize employers to not hire local workers and instead hire through the H-2A visa program. Oregon has approximately 72,000 farmworkers with the majority living in the state and available to work. We want employers to invest in Oregon workers who will then reinvest their wage dollars in our rural communities.

The H-2A program creates a larger power imbalance between employers and foreign workers on temporary visas that only allow them to work for one employer. This dependency on a single employer creates a vulnerable workforce and opportunities for exploitation, including labor trafficking. In some cases, there are abuses of illegal recruitment fees, recruitment fraud, unsanitary housing conditions, and threats to terminate employee visas.

PCUN urges you to vote no on SB 622 and instead focus on strengthening the local agricultural workforce.

Thank you,

Ira Cuello-Martinez
Policy Advocacy Director
PCUN