



Chair Taylor, Vice-Chair Bonham, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to SB 622.

Oregon thrives when all who call this state home are able to participate in society. Over the past several years, Innovation Law Lab has successfully advocated for policies that aim to meet this goal. Our state's agricultural industry relies heavily on immigrant workers. More than 62% of farmworkers in Oregon are immigrants, and many face low wages, and sometimes difficult and dangerous working conditions.

While many agricultural workers who are employed across Oregon are not seasonal and live in our state, some farms bring farmworkers in from other countries through the federal H-2A visa program. H-2A visas are seasonal and limited to agricultural work, and visa holders are unable to access unemployment insurance as a condition of their status.

Employers' payment into the UI pool has never been based on which workers are eligible for UI and which are not - employers are required to contribute for the benefit of all Oregonians who may need this assistance. We fear that by exempting employers who hire H-2A workers from paying into UI, the entire pool of payments would be reduced. This risks the reduction of available benefits for Oregon's entire workforce.

Instead of incentivizing employers to differentiate between employees' status, our state should create policies that support all Oregon workers - including contributing to farmworker benefits and ensuring safe working conditions for all of our state's workers.

Oregon's policies should support local businesses and their workers alike. Unfortunately, we do not believe this bill meets this goal. We urge you to oppose SB 622.

Sincerely,

Isa Peña  
Director of Strategy - Innovation Law Lab