



## **Subject: Testimony in Support of HB 3194 – Holding Unregistered Farmworker Camps Accountable**

Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Chotzen and Wallen, and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary,

I am the Rev. Connie Yost, President of Farm Worker Ministry Northwest. I represent the faith community of Oregon as we stand in solidarity with farm workers in their right to have safe working conditions and housing, a living wage, in all ways treated with the dignity and respect their hard work deserves. These are truly essential workers who go unseen and unappreciated for the most part. I am writing to express our strong support for HB 3194, a bill that will help protect workers from unsafe and illegal housing conditions.

### **What HB 3194 Will Do**

This bill makes three key changes:

- Ensures Landowner Accountability – Landowners who lease property to unregistered housing providers must take reasonable steps to ensure their tenants are legally registered and compliant with state rules around labor housing registration. This closes a loophole that has allowed negligent landowners to avoid responsibility for extreme worker exploitation. This has been especially harmful to farmworkers on illegal cannabis grows. All people providing housing to workers should have permission from the state to do so.
- Removes Barriers to Justice – Right now, workers must prove "ongoing harm" in court, which is too difficult for seasonal workers. HB 3194 removes the requirement for an injunction while still allowing it as an optional legal tool for workers who need it.
- Aligns Penalties with Existing Labor Laws – If a worker brings a claim under CORA, the maximum total fine today is just \$500—an amount that does nothing to stop bad actors. HB 3194 increases the penalty to \$2,000 per violation, in line with what the Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) can already enforce.

### **Why HB 3194 is Needed**

Workers in Oregon are being forced to live in terrible conditions, including:

- Makeshift shelters made of tarps and plywood
- No running water or bathrooms
- Overcrowding and unsafe living spaces

Since 2020, most citations for unregistered labor camps have been tied to cannabis operations, but all workers should live in safe and decent housing. Right now, landowners can allow these camps on their property and face no consequences if the camp operators disappear after the season ends.

*Optional to include: What the Camp Operator Registration Act (CORA) Does*

CORA requires farm labor camp operators to register with the state and follow basic safety rules. However, loopholes in the law allow unregistered camps to persist, putting workers at serious risk. HB 3194 would ensure that landowners take responsibility for what happens on their land.

### **Why This Matters**

- No worker should live in inhumane conditions just because landowners fail to do their due diligence.
- This issue affects communities across Oregon, from Southern Oregon to the Willamette Valley and beyond.
- HB 3194 takes a balanced approach—landowners who follow the law and lease their land to a registered, licensed, and endorsed camp operator will not be impacted. Those who allow illegal and unsafe conditions should be held accountable.

### **Conclusion**

HB 3194 is a common-sense solution to a serious problem. It protects workers, ensures landowners take responsibility for their property, and strengthens outdated laws.

On behalf of all people of faith and moral conscience in Oregon, I urge you to support HB 3194. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Rev. Connie Yost, President  
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