

To our Oregon Legislative Representatives:

My name is Jamie Zielinski, and our company grows farm products in Salem, Oregon. Some of the crops we grow include, green beans, corn, hazel nuts, grass seed, sugar beet seed, squash, wheat, and we also operate a wholesale nursery. Unlike many farms, we employ approximately 45-50 people year round, and full time. This is due to our diversification between the farm and nursery which requires it. Our family has been farming for generations, and the next generation continues in carrying it on today.

I plead with you to please oppose HB 2548. This is a very negative bill for farm employers. Oregon already has some of the highest labor cost in the country, which make it extremely difficult competing with other farms and nurseries across the United States. Other states are still operating their farms under Federal minimum wage (\$7.25), and even with Oregon's minimum wage set at the current rate of \$14.70, I would venture to say that no farm can hire for that rate (more like \$15 or greater). Farmers generally don't get to set prices for their commodities, so there is no way to recover the increased cost passed by the new governing Board. I feel the creation of such a board is another is simply a redundancy of what other government entities are already doing. We do not need more bureaucracy and regulations when they are already covered by our current

Farm workers are currently protected by very strong workplace regulations such as paid sick time and minimum wage. Oregon OSHA has one of the highest worksite inspection rates and has adopted some of the most expansive workplace protections in the country. Which makes me want to ask "What is real issue is this bill trying to solve?". We can't keep designing more boards that are not truly necessary and which cost tax payers more to support.

HB 2548 gives unelected bureaucrats the power to set wages and safety rules that go far beyond current protections, adding more regulatory and cost burden to farms. Who would be the overseers of the protections? My guess is it would not include farmers, but rather unions and attorney's looking for their own gain. I see this as a way for government to **continue to make Oregon the least business friendly state**, and to attempt to have farmers just decide they can't continue to farm. We are probably the best stewards of our land and in producing products that American truly needs; products that actually bring revenue into our state. We cherish every employee we have and we work hard to protect them; for without them we would not be in business just like every other business without their employees.

I am strongly opposed to the proposal in HB 2548 that **eliminates at-will employment** for farms and ranches. HB 2548 carves out farms, and why just farms? All other private sectors in Oregon enjoy at-will status, but farms—whose employment needs are impacted by weather, yields, trade and market conditions, pests and diseases—would not. This is unfair.

This bill doesn't help workers or consumers; it just makes farming harder and more expensive. Many farms have already had to reduce worker hours, change crops, or automate to control labor costs associated with overtime; HB 2548 would have more severe consequences. **I urge you to vote no on HB 2548 to protect Oregon farms and ranches and the jobs we currently provide.**