

Testimony for House Bill 3193

House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards

Submitted By: Ella Allen

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Dear Chair Grayber, Vice-Chair Elmer, Vice-Chair Muñoz, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ella Allen, I live in Salem, and I am writing in support of HB 3193, which would establish the Farmworker Disaster Relief Fund.

Farmworkers are essential to Oregon's economy with over 72,000 workers driving the five-billion-dollar agricultural industry. Most of these workers are migrants from Mexico, Guatemala, and Central America and are disproportionately affected by the effects of climate change. Research has shown that agricultural workers are 35 times more likely to die from heat-related stress than workers in other industries.

Farm workers are especially vulnerable to loss of work due to natural disasters outside of their control including extreme heat waves, wildfires, and other natural disasters; all of which are becoming increasingly common because of climate change. Additionally, with an already low wage of only around \$34,500 annually, most live paycheck to paycheck and are unable to recover from a loss of work for weeks and sometimes even months. **With an unexpected loss of work, farm workers sometimes feel the need to choose between being homeless and putting food on the table or working in dangerous conditions just to earn a barely livable wage.**

Historically, farm workers have been intentionally excluded from receiving benefits under the Federal Labor Standard Act of 1938, which established worker protections like minimum wage, overtime pay, and other benefits. Additionally, documentation also makes them ineligible for public programs that provide aid, employment insurance, and pensions. Coupled with an already disproportionately low wage, lack of qualification for benefits puts farm workers and their families at risk of homelessness and hunger when they are unable to work. **A loss of work could mean life or death for these people and their families.**

The establishment of this relief fund would provide essential support to one of our most vulnerable groups, keeping our essential workers and their families safe and alive. HB 3193 will provide temporary financial relief to farm workers in Oregon who lose work or wages due to extreme weather conditions. HB 3193 will define a "qualifying disaster" in regards to extreme weather as more than just extreme heat and smoke. This includes snowstorms, ice storms, heavy raining, flooding, pandemics, etc. Conditions in which our farm workers have continued working in despite the dangerous impacts to them physically and mentally.

With the increasing frequency of large-scale natural disasters as a result of climate change, it is incredibly important that we protect our essential community members from loss of income, due to factors entirely outside of their control. HB 3193 will keep workers and their families safe, alive, and healthy.

I urge you to vote YES on HB 3193, to provide protection and support for our farm workers in Oregon.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Ella Allen

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