

Submitter: Chad Kernutt
On Behalf Of: WE THE PEOPLE
Committee: House Committee On Labor and Workplace Standards
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2548

Dear Lawmakers,

My name is Chad Kernutt and I urge you to vote NO on HB-2548. This bill undermines the relationship between farm employers and workers by transferring critical decisions about staffing, wages, benefits, and training to an unelected and unaccountable bureaucratic body. Farmers would be stripped of their ability to make management decisions under this punitive concept.

HB 2548 threatens the survival of family farms and ranches and accelerates job loss. HB 2548 targets an industry that largely cannot adjust prices to account for rising labor costs. Oregon's agricultural sector exports 80% of its produce, competing not just with other local farms, but with international growers in Mexico, Guatemala, Turkey, and beyond. By raising operational costs for Oregon farmers, the bill diminishes their competitiveness in both domestic and global markets.

Oregon's farmers are already struggling with labor shortages and rising costs. Additional mandates from a workplace standards board would only increase these challenges, potentially forcing the closure of multigenerational farms, eliminating farm jobs, or reducing work hours.

HB 2548 duplicates existing worker protections. Oregon already boasts some of the strongest labor laws in the nation, which apply equally to farmworkers. The facts do not support the idea that farm workers need additional protections through HB 2548. Oregon's workplace protections are already so expansive and costly that many small farms can no longer afford to operate. The last USDA ag census showed a loss of approximately 6% of farms in Oregon over the previous five years and over 65% of farms operating at a net cash loss in 2022.

HB 2548 risks shutting down family farms and ranches by piling unaffordable costs onto an industry already reeling from labor shortages, climate challenges, and market volatility. This measure could destabilize rural economies, all while duplicating or contradicting existing worker protections. The stakes are too high for this untested experiment. Please vote NO on HB-2548. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Chad Kernutt
Albany, Oregon
IN GOD WE TRUST