

Submitter: Devon Wells
On Behalf Of: Hood River County Farm Bureau
Committee: House Committee On Labor and Workplace Standards
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2548

I'm asking you to oppose HB 2548.

The Hood River County Farm Bureau includes 189 family farms in Hood River, and we FULLY OPPOSE this legislation.

This is one of the highest threats to keep farming in Oregon. We already have some of the highest labor costs in the country. This legislation is a ridiculous attack on the ability for farmers to take care of farm workers how best works for their operation.

This bill would give unelected, uneducated and biased bureaucrats the power to set wages and safety rules that go far beyond current protections, adding more lopsided regulatory burden family farms. Oregon's state agencies and legislature have adopted very harmful regulations in the last five years with ZERO accountability for their actions. This board would be no different; its members aren't even elected; they are appointed by the same uneducated people that have made previous rules and laws in Oregon.

HB 2548 unfairly targets agriculture by taking away at-will employment, meaning we wouldn't be able to make necessary staffing decisions without the risk of costly lawsuits. We also don't believe that farms should be forced to keep employees who may not meet performance expectations or adapt to the demands of the job. Is that what YOU WANT for your small business?

Oh, but wait, unless you're a farmer, it DOESN'T MATTER. All other sectors in Oregon would be at-will, but farms—whose employment needs are impacted by weather, yields, trade, pests, diseases, etc.—would not. Not only is that UNFAIR and DISCRIMINATORY, but it will likely result in job loss, not job security.

This bill doesn't help workers or consumers; it just makes farming in Hood River and across the State harder and more expensive. HB 2548 will force our farms to make operational choices like reducing their workforce and using H2A employees instead. Possibly automating or selling their operations all together. Is that what you want for Oregon Agriculture?

On behalf of all Farmers in HOOD RIVER COUNTY, I urge you to VOTE NO to protect our farms and jobs.

Devon Wells
President, Hood River County Farm Bureau