

I am a farmer in the Willamette Valley and am asking you to oppose HB 2548 because it threatens my ability to continue farming. Oregon already has some of the highest labor costs in the country. Farmers have been challenged with several tough years and can't afford any more regulations and wage increases.

This bill would give unelected bureaucrats the power to set wages and safety rules that are far beyond current protections, adding more regulatory burden to farms like mine. As farmers, we know how devastating this regulatory model is. Oregon's state agencies have adopted numerous, very harmful regulations in the last five years with little to no accountability for their actions. This board would be no different; its members aren't even elected.

By taking away at-will employment, HB 2548 unfairly targets agriculture. This means I wouldn't be able to make necessary staffing decisions without the risk of costly lawsuits which could cost tens of thousands of dollars or more for one claim. We also should not be forced to keep employees who may not meet performance expectations or adapt to the demands of the job. We have job descriptions for employees on our farm and opportunities for our employees to move up in the company. We appreciate our employees and want them to succeed. I'm not sure why everyone doesn't understand this and instead wants to make us a target and tell us how to run our business! Every other sector 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, but it will likely result in job loss, not job security.

This bill doesn't help workers or consumers; it just makes farming harder and more expensive. I have already had to manage hours to comply with agricultural overtime, and HB 2548 could force me to make tough operational choices like reducing my workforce, changing crops, automating, or selling the operation.

I urge you to vote NO on HB 2548 to protect our farms and jobs and ask you to strongly oppose HB 2548. It is a bad bill and will be very harmful to the agricultural industry in Oregon.

Thank you.

Dana Estensen