

Date: March 10, 2025

TO: House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards

SUBJECT: Yes on HB 3193

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

My name is Brenda Garcia Mejía, I live in Salem, Oregon and **I am writing in support of HB 3193**, the Farmworker Disaster Relief Fund.

Coming from a farmworker-dominant community, I am aware of the pressing need for this program. It would be irresponsible to ignore the role that farmworkers play in Oregon's agricultural economy, whether they work seasonally or year-round. Regardless of their specific role, farmworkers support our agriculture through their tireless efforts, despite facing systemic challenges such as inadequate employee care, limited access to resources and other inequities.

Unfortunately, many farmworkers lack the financial stability to take time off in response to extreme weather events. For many, working in the fields of nurseries or other agricultural sectors is their sole source of income, which is already low, and they often have no safety net to rely on to support loved ones. Like any other employers, farm owners do not want their workers to miss days, but the reality is that workers in unsafe conditions are often still expected to show up, as they are deemed essential workers. **This puts farmworkers in a difficult position pushing them to chose between either continuing working through unsafe conditions or risk losing their job for prioritizing their safety.**

Farmworkers are often the first to experience the impacts of extreme weather conditions. Research has shown that agricultural workers are 35 times more likely to die from heat-related stress than workers in other industries. Extreme heat and drought also are fueling more intense wildfire seasons, and outdoor workers are increasingly having to deal with harmful exposures to wildfire smoke and unhealthy air quality.

HB 3193 will provide temporary financial relief to farmworkers 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 snow storms, ice storms, heavy raining, flooding, pandemics, etc. Conditions in which our farmworkers have continued working in despite the dangerous impacts to them physically and mentally.

Sincerely,

Brenda Garcia Mejía