

Submitter: Miranda Bermes
On Behalf Of: Sacred Organizing Coalition
Committee: House Committee On Labor and Workplace Standards
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3193

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

My name is Pastor Miranda Bermes, I live in Hood River, and I am writing in strong support of HB 3193, the Farmworker Disaster Relief Fund.

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.

As a resident of the Columbia Gorge, I have seen firsthand how much abundant produce is grown and harvested here in the valley, and I have seen the number of dedicated workers it takes to properly care for the fields and orchards. And yet, the impacts of Climate Change are making this an increasingly dangerous job, regardless of the time of year. The people who work in the orchards and fields of our state deserve to be protected, and have the support they need in order to not put their life at risk when dangerous conditions arise. We need to protect our farmers and orchardists as well as all whom they employ in order to ensure that all Oregonians have the food they need to eat. Those who care for the food that sustains us all deserve our respect, support, and protection, and I believe that this bill is an excellent step in that direction.

I urge you to vote YES on HB 3193, to provide protections and support for our farmworkers in Oregon.

Sincerely,

Pastor Miranda Bermes