

March 11, 2025

Dear House Committee on Labor & Workforce Standards:

My name is Anita Neal, and I operate a small family farm growing grass seed, clover and peas as well as baling and export of Annual, Ryegrass and Fescue straw. In addition, we operate a drainage company that heavily relies on its income from farmers.

I am writing to oppose HB 2548 and strongly urge you to stop this incredibly harmful bill to the Agricultural Community of Oregon as well as the consumers and businesses relying heavily on the income from agriculture such as fertilizer providers, fuel providers, and farm stores to name a few.

In the last few years, Oregon Agriculture has suffered incredible hardships as a result of having some of the highest labor cost in the country coupled with a tremendous downturn in the export market of grass seed and forage feed. Farmers are at the mercy of the market and don't have the option to set prices for their commodities. To increase the minimum wage higher than any other industry in Oregon is not only unfair, but Passing HB 2548 would allow no way to recover the increased cost passed by the new governing Board.

In addition, farm workers are currently protected by very strong workplace regulations such as paid sick time and minimum wage. Oregon OSHA has one of the highest worksite inspection rates and has adopted some of the most expansive workplace protections in the country. It is unclear as to what real issue this bill is trying to solve given Oregon OSHA is already a stringent protector of its employees.

Passing of HB 2548 gives unelected bureaucrats the power to set wages and safety rules that go far beyond current protections, adding more regulatory and cost burden to farms. There is no accountability for the decisions they make, even if their decisions ultimately close farms or result in layoffs.

I am strongly opposed to the proposal in HB 2548 eliminates at-will employment for farms and ranches. Oregon is an at-will employment state for ALL employers and to single out agriculture only as non-at will employers unfairly carves out farms and puts us at risk for costly claims. All other private sectors in Oregon enjoy at-will status.

This bill doesn't help workers or consumers; it just makes farming harder and more expensive. In a market where many farms have already had to reduce worker hours, change crops, or automate to control labor costs associated with overtime; HB 2548 would have more severe consequences on not only farms, but the employees.

I urge you to vote no on HB 2548 to protect Oregon farms and ranches and the jobs we currently provide. To pass the devastating HB 2548 would not only shutdown Oregon farms, most being family owned and generational, it would also affect all citizens of Oregon by trickling down increased costs to the consumers, and devastate those companies relying on the income of the agricultural community.

Anita Neal, Owner

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