

Submitter: Aimee Stone

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Labor and Workplace Standards

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2548

I am writing in strong support of HB 2548 and in direct opposition to the misleading claims pushed by opponents of this bill. HB 2548 is not a “one-size-fits-all mandate” that threatens small farms, nor is the intent to inflict economic harm on Oregon’s independent farming communities. It is a necessary step to protect the agricultural workers who have been historically excluded from any labor protections pushing them into unsafe working conditions to be overworked and underpaid. Claiming that Oregon already has significant and robust protections for farmworkers is simply untrue. If Oregon’s existing labor laws were truly sufficient, we wouldn’t see wage theft, unsafe working conditions, and farmworkers being disproportionately affected by zoonotic diseases, or the rise of climate disasters like extreme heat, and wildfires.

It's understandable that at first glance, small farmers may see this bill as a potential threat, fearing it could place economic strain on Oregon’s farming communities. However, I also hope these same individuals understand that the worst labor abuses aren’t coming from small, family-run farms but from massive agribusiness operations that rely on exploiting a historically vulnerable workforce that is overworked, underpaid, and subjected to dangerous, unsafe working conditions. The corporatized agribusiness groups pushing misguided talking points, particularly those regurgitated by the Oregon Farm Bureau, need to stop pretending they share the same struggles as independent farmers. It is their exploitative labor practices and monopolistic control over the agricultural sector that has driven rural farming communities into crisis, not basic protections for the workers who harvest our food. For too long, large agribusinesses have used division as a tool to maintain the status quo by pitting farm workers and small farmers against each other while they continue to consolidate wealth and power. What truly scares these corporations is the prospect of being forced to discontinue the cycle of exploitation which allows them to dominate the market, drive down prices, and make it nearly impossible for independent farmers to compete. This system has long fueled their profits and its reliant on the division between small farms and the farmworkers laboring in our food system.

The majority of those writing in support of HB2548 are coming directly from the farmworkers of Oregon who are the backbone of our food system. Listen to their stories. Their essential labor sustains our communities and keeps food on our tables. In their testimony, they share experiences of how they are overworked, underpaid, and deprived of the basic rights and protections given to other labor sectors. I urge you to stand with the farmworkers and ensure they have a voice at the table because without their labor, our food system would collapse.

Thank you.