

RE: HB 2548

To whom it may concern:

My name is Karen Jaeger, and I am a second-generation nurseryman/farmer working in this industry for over 45 years. HB 2548 will negatively affect my business and all the employees that we employ throughout the year, so I am submitting by OPPOSITION TO HB2548.

We care deeply about the health and safety of our employees. 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 protections in the country. Oregon has some of the highest wages in the country. Nurserymen and farmers do not set the price for their commodities, so there is no way to recover the increased cost passed by the new governing Board.

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

I am also opposing this bill because it eliminates at-will employment for farms and ranches. HB 2548 carves out farms and puts us at risk for costly claims for making necessary staffing decisions. All other private sectors in Oregon enjoy at-will status, but farms – whose employment needs are impacted by weather, yields, trade and market conditions, pests and diseases – would not. This is unfair.

We have already been affected by the overtime bill that has forced us to reduce worker hours, change crops and automate to control labor costs associated with overtime. HB 2548 would have more severe consequences.

This bill does not help workers or consumers; it just makes farming harder and more expensive. I urge you to vote no on HB 2548 to protect Oregon farms and ranches and the jobs we currently provide.

Sincerely,



Karen Jaeger, Owner

Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas, Inc./Fessler Farms, Inc.