

March 11, 2025



Representative Grayber, Chair
Representative Elmer, Vice-Chair
Representative Muñoz, Vice-Chair
Members of the House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards

Re: HB 2548 Opposition

Dear Chair Grayber, Vice-Chair Elmer, Vice-Chair Muñoz, and Committee Members:

My name is Tom Fessler with Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas and we are a third-generation grower in the Willamette Valley. We grow nursery stock, grass seed, and other row crops. We employ around 240 employees, many of whom have worked for us for decades. Many of them choose to work with us because we provide stable, year-round employment with great benefits.

I am **opposed to HB 2548** because it threatens our farm's ability to continue on to the next generation. We ship roughly 90% of our products out of state. Unlike our competitors in other states, Oregon already has some of the highest labor costs in the country, the strictest workforce protection standards, and burdensome regulations placed on ag employers and employees. This bill would only tip the scales further in favor of other states.

HB 2548:

- Gives unelected officials the power to set wages and safety rules that go far beyond current protections, without any guardrails that consider economic burdens placed on farms, or the impact the standards would have on farms or ag employees.
- Unfairly takes away at-will employment, which no other sector would be forced to do.
- Shifts the burden of proof, while increasing costs that will not benefit the workers or consumers of agricultural goods.
- Takes away the ability of employees to work directly with employers to negotiate wages, hours, and other benefits.

HB 2548 would have unintended and detrimental consequences on farms and farmworkers, just as we have seen with other recent legislation, such as ag overtime. Farmworkers are getting their hours cut and receiving less pay, after being promised higher pay. Likewise, HB 2548 will lead to farms going out of business, increased tension between employers and employees, and farms cutting workforce and mechanizing to lessen the risks associated with having employees.

HB 2548 will be a death sentence to farms in Oregon, and with that the lost opportunity for employment of farmworkers. I urge you to **oppose HB 2548** and support the farmworkers and farms that would be negatively impacted by it.

Sincerely,

Tom Fessler
Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas
Woodburn, OR