

Submitter: skyler williams
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Labor and Workplace Standards
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2548

TO: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
RE: Support of HB 2548
DATE: Feb. 20, 2025.

Dear Chair Representative Dacia Grayber, Vice Chair Representatives Lucetta Elmer, Lesly Muñoz, and members of the House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards,

I am Skyler Williams, a college student at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon studying Environmental Science. I am writing to strongly support the passing of House Bill 2548.

House Bill 2548 would help to create labor standards laws for our many agricultural workers. The Bill would prevent these workers from being fired without reason. It would provide them with better minimum working standards, and support when these standards are violated. Every other year, these standards will be reviewed, evaluated and revised or updated, if necessary, by the board. This bill will help to protect the health and welfare of agricultural workers which we so heavily rely on.

In Oregon, and especially in the Willamette Valley, agriculture is the leading economic industry. There are over 100,000 farmworkers in the state, most of which are latino, primarily of Mexican descent, and are of various legal citizen statuses. These workers provide us, as well as many others around the country, with the food that we eat. There are countless stories of farmworkers that are often not provided basic workers rights, protection or benefits, and are not given fair wages, hours or safe and healthy working conditions. When I think my life as a student and working part-time at a restaurant is hard work, I can't even imagine how it must be to work in the fields from sun up to sun down in poor working conditions for minimal wages with no benefits.

These workers are forced to endure extreme weather conditions and environmental disasters. Farmworkers are at increased risk of developing asthma and other respiratory illnesses. They are exposed to gases, particulate matter, fertilizers, dust, cleaning agents, feed additives and even smoke. During times when wildfire smoke creates hazardous air quality, farmworkers are made to keep working if they want to get paid. Oregon farmworker housing rules don't require a kitchen in the home, and only require 40 square feet per bed in the home. Housing is often located much too

close to the fields, exposing farmworkers and their families to pesticide drift.

The environmental racism and injustice that these workers face is so clearly apparent. Many of these agricultural workers are rural, Latino, are of low income, have difficult legal statuses and even language barriers. These people often have very limited access to political representation, leaving these essential workers extremely under-represented.

Agricultural workers have been enduring these extremely poor work conditions for far too long! A change needs to be made as soon as possible, and a good start is passing HB 2548!

Thanks for reading,
Skyler Williams.