



March 13, 2025

TO: House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards

SUBJECT: Yes on HB 2548

Dear Chair Grayber, Vice-Chairs Elmer and Muñoz, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jennifer Eisele, Ecosystems & Communities Project Manager for Beyond Toxics, and I am writing today to testify in strong support of HB 2548 to create a Farmworker Standards Board in Oregon. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support for this important policy solution! Beyond Toxics is a longstanding advocate for farmworker justice.

For generations, farmworkers have been excluded from key labor protections such as the National Labor Relations Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act. Such exclusions have resulted in farmworkers being one of the lowest paid workers in the state and inadequate working conditions. Creating a Farmworker Standards Board will ensure that Oregon's farmworkers' voices have a say in setting industry standards and correcting historic exclusions. Oregon must join cities and states across the country that have proven that workforce standards boards work. These boards bring workers together with industry and public representatives to set meaningful standards, with real enforcement power to ensure accountability and to give workers the voice and protections they deserve and give our communities the essential food we need.

There are over 72,000 Oregon farmworkers, who put food on our tables and contribute over \$6.4B to our state's economy, yet they experience poor working conditions and earn an average of just \$34,500 annually. Most farmworkers are immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala, and Central America, many of whom speak an Indigenous language.

If established, this board provides equal representation for both farmworkers and farmworker employers for the purpose of establishing minimum standards for the working conditions of agricultural workers, including but not limited to compensation, work schedules and other working conditions that are necessary to protect the health and welfare of such workers. HB 2548 will give historically

excluded workers their first voice in setting industry standards with real enforcement power and accountability. The board will ensure access to fair wages, safe conditions, and protection from retaliation.

I urge a YES vote on HB 2548 to create a Farmworker Standards Board and give farmworkers the ability to set standards for the industry.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Eisele, Ecosystems & Communities Project Manager
Beyond Toxics