

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

Dear Committee Members

I Oppose Oregon House Bill 2548: A Threat to Worker Freedom and Fair Employment Practices

Oregon House Bill 2548 represents a significant overreach in labor law, imposing restrictions that would negatively impact both agricultural workers and employers across the state. One of the most concerning provisions of the bill is its mandate for the mandatory unionization of agricultural workers, which would fundamentally alter the employment landscape for a crucial industry. In addition, it undermines the principle of at-will employment, a cornerstone of Oregon's labor market, and places significant power in the hands of an unelected committee that could set wages without the democratic checks and balances provided by elected officials. These changes collectively risk creating an environment of inefficiency, reduced flexibility, and limited worker choice.

Mandatory unionization is an attack on the individual rights of workers. Under current law, workers have the autonomy to choose whether they want to join a union, based on their personal interests, needs, and values. Bill 2548 eliminates this right, forcing agricultural workers to be represented by unions even if they do not wish to be involved. While unions may be beneficial to some workers, imposing membership across the board ignores the diversity of opinion and personal preference that exists within the workforce. Every worker has different needs, and no one-size-fits-all approach should be applied to such a diverse and vital sector. Forcing union membership can also place financial burdens on workers, who are required to pay union dues regardless of whether they benefit from the services provided.

Additionally, the bill's impact on at-will employment is deeply troubling. At-will employment allows both employers and employees the flexibility to end a working relationship at any time, without the need for extensive legal procedures or justifications. This system is especially important in industries such as agriculture, where workers may be hired for specific seasons or tasks. House Bill 2548 would interfere with this flexibility, limiting employers' ability to make decisions about their workforce based on changing market conditions, productivity, or other business needs. The loss of this flexibility would create uncertainty for both employers and workers, leading to potential job losses or fewer job opportunities as businesses are forced to adopt more rigid employment practices.

Perhaps most concerning, however, is the bill's provision allowing an unelected committee to have the authority to set wages for agricultural workers. This committee would wield significant power over one of the most crucial aspects of the labor market without any accountability to voters or the public. Wage-setting by unelected officials

removes the transparency and democratic process that voters expect in decisions that directly affect the economy and the livelihoods of workers. Such power should remain with elected officials, who are accountable to the public, rather than being concentrated in the hands of a small, unaccountable body. Allowing this unelected committee to determine wages not only risks undermining fair market principles but also could result in arbitrary or poorly-informed decisions that hurt both workers and employers.

Furthermore, the potential for significant wage increases, which could come from this unelected wage-setting committee, threatens to further destabilize an already fragile agricultural industry. Oregon's agriculture sector is facing numerous financial challenges, with rising costs and a labor shortage that continues to escalate. The recent implementation of agricultural overtime laws has already put additional pressure on farm owners, many of whom are struggling to balance fair compensation with the financial realities of operating in an increasingly competitive global market.

It's for these reasons I oppose HB2548

Thank you for your time.