

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

Please vote YES on HB 2548 to create the Farmworker Standards Board.

Farmworkers are critically important to our economy going forward as climate change increasingly interferes with the effectiveness of our ability to produce farm products in many areas of the country. Oregon is lucky in that the Pacific Northwest will be a place for people to go who are trying to escape from deteriorating conditions in parts of US South of us, and even though more harsh things will work better here. We are still affected, and there will need to develop careful regulation of farming conditions. It is crucial that we create a Farmworker Standards Board along with careful and consensus based development of labor protections such as those in the National Labor Relations Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act. The exclusion of farmworkers from these protections has had detrimental effects, resulting in farmworkers being among the lowest-paid workers in the state and facing inadequate working conditions. We need to work on ways to increase farmworker household income because currently they are quite income insufficient. In order to do this there may need also to be more supportive to the full rural farming sector.

By creating a Farmworker Standards Board, we can ensure that farmworkers have a voice in setting industry standards and addressing these historical exclusions.

Having done some volunteer work helping farmworkers understand utility bills and utility resources, and having worked on a study of Mexican-Americans who have dropped out of the migrant pattern and become US citizens I am aware of the record of outstanding service of Mexican-Americans who served in the military in WWII. I think it is time to make things work in this sector of our economy - to pull together so we can make it through increasing harsh times ahead, already baked into our common climate future in the PNW.

The effectiveness of workforce standards boards has been proven in cities and states across the country. These boards bring workers, industry representatives, and public representatives together to establish meaningful standards and provide real enforcement power to ensure accountability.

I urge you to pass HB 2548 and create a Farmworker Standards Board, empowering farmworkers to play an active role in shaping the standards of the industry they support.