

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

I am writing in strong opposition of HB 2548.

I am a 38 year old, 4th generation farmer in Hood River, Oregon. I have farmed for 17 years on our small family farm where we grow pears, the state fruit of Oregon. The Hood River valley is one of the only regions in the world that can produce a high quality pear that is marketable. The Pacific Northwest leads the world in pear production. Hood River has become one of the most expensive places in Oregon to live and do business. We have no choice to take our business elsewhere, this is where the climate and soils allow us to do that. Orchards are a very long term investment with trees taking decades to become thriving orchards. We inherited this precious piece of land and fight to keep this a farming community despite so many influences that continue to make that difficult. We have already been challenged with over regulation. My job has gone from ensuring our farming practices are strong enough to keep us producing quality food to managing that we are staying compliant with the latest fad regulation someone in Salem or Portland has thought up with no farm experience whatsoever, from behind their desk, cashing their steady paycheck. Maybe some work could be done on how to keep family farms in Oregon alive and thriving rather than treating us like we are villains. Last I checked, not many villains are doing what they do to make the small profits, or lack of profits, many years negative profits, that we deal with. It is not getting cheaper to farm, in all accounts it is getting much more expensive, yet we are price takers, we have no control over how much we can ask before the market just says no. Many of you reading this wouldn't understand that. Neither side of politics would understand that anymore. So when I read about spending my tax dollars to fund more government oversight I cringe. I also cringe at more cost to me as a producer. I could not afford any more than what I do for my workers now. I certainly can't afford to keep an employee that isn't proficient at their job. I have been lucky that the majority of my employees have been working for my family for longer than I have, and I think that says a lot about the working conditions we already have. Most of the latest oversight has been more detrimental to workers than its intent. It doesn't help build a culture in the workplace, it does the opposite of that and makes our workplaces robotic. Orchards, for the most part, have a strong culture and way of life that people enjoy being around. If more effort would be put into making family farms more profitable then I could afford to pay it forward to my employees. I pay as much as I can afford and would love it if I could pay more. That is what is going to keep farm workers engaged and happy to be farm workers. What this committee is trying to protect is the worker that wants to do the bare minimum and not get fired. Kind of like government employees. I totally

disagree with our Governor having the ultimate say in who sits on this board, and it might surprise you that I am not a republican, I honestly don't feel like I fit in any political box because they have all become so far leaning that it is just a circus. The last topic I want to touch on is pay rates based on geographic area. This is hitting Hood River farmers twice. First of all, we know it is expensive to live here. That is why most of us have been forced into spending our own money to build labor housing on our land. I house four worker families here. I would build more if I had the land and could afford to do that. So we already are paying more just to keep workers. Imposing higher pay rates, which we already pay higher than average, would just double down on the cost of keeping employees. Like I said, if I had the money, I would gladly pay my workers more. They are vital to our businesses. Do not take the testimony in opposition lightly. Many good people are writing in opposition.