

Submitter: Rodney Hightower
On Behalf Of: Strome-Fisher Farm
Committee: House Committee On Labor and Workplace Standards
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2548

House Committee On Labor and Workplace Standards,

I am submitting testimony in opposition to HB 2548. I am the co-owner and President of Strome-Fisher Farm in Junction City. We are a diversified farm growing turf grasses for seed, specialty seed crops and grain. Currently our farm supports four families.

My first concern is that this bill creates a regulatory body that is not comprised of elected officials. The members of the board would be appointed by the Governor and would have no accountability except to the Governor. As the entities being subject to the rules enacted by the board we would have no say in the make up of said board.

Second, we already have strict rules in Oregon regarding employee rights, treatment and working conditions. This bill creates another unneeded body to oversee and regulate what other State Agencies already have jurisdiction over. It would be redundant and is unnecessary.

Third, agriculture in general is struggling at this time. We are facing the same crushing inflationary pressures as consumers. Our costs have risen significantly in the last several years. At the same time, the prices that we receive for our products have gone down. Agriculture producers are price takers and not price makers. This means that we do not control the prices that we receive. When our costs rise, we can not just raise prices and pass them along. So when our costs go up we have to absorb the added cost.

Fourth, this has the potential to harm the relationships that we have with our employees. On our farm, we try our best to treat all employees with respect and dignity. This has resulted in a record of employees that have a long tenure. We want to continue these relationships by making employees feel valued. This bill has the potential to harm these relationships.

In conclusion, this bill seems unnecessary and would be redundant, ignoring the laws and employee regulations we already have in this state. It would make it harder for farms to do business in the State of Oregon. It would also add more costs and regulatory burdens to our farms at a time when we are already struggling.

Best regards,

Rodney Hightower
Strome-Fisher Farm