

Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 2548

Presented to the Oregon House Committee on Business and Labor

March 12, 2025

Chair Grayber and Members of the Committee:

My name is Lauren Lucht, and I own and operate a seed transplant company, NW Transplants, in Molalla. I am here today to express my strong opposition to House Bill 2548, which would impose excessive labor mandates that threaten the viability of small and mid-sized farms like mine.

As a vegetable seedling grower, I play a vital role in both Oregon's and the global agricultural industry by producing healthy young plants that farmers depend on for successful crops. Many of these farmers contribute to Oregon's specialty seed market, which is essential for supplying the majority of the world's beet and carrot seeds. My business operates in a highly seasonal cycle, requiring a flexible workforce to manage seeding, plant care, and shipping during peak periods. However, the rigid employment regulations and increased costs imposed by HB 2548 will severely limit my ability to operate efficiently, jeopardizing both my business and the farmers who rely on it.

Growing vegetable starts is not a year-round job. Workers come in during the peak season and then move on. HB 2548's prohibition on at-will employment and its "for cause" termination requirement create unnecessary red tape that does not fit the seasonal nature of farm work.

If a worker is unreliable or struggles to integrate into our team-oriented environment, I need the flexibility to make immediate staffing decisions to keep my business running smoothly.

This bill would impose a lengthy disciplinary process, consuming valuable time and resources that could otherwise be dedicated to maintaining productivity and meeting seasonal demands.

My farm already operates on thin margins, if HB 2548 passes I will have to cut jobs, reduce hours, or mechanize operations—leaving fewer opportunities for local workers.

These extra costs will force me to raise prices, making my products less competitive and hurting farmers who rely on affordable, high-quality transplants.

HB 2548 creates a new government board with unchecked power to regulate labor conditions in agriculture. This board will have the authority to increase wage rates, impose new working conditions, and mandate training requirements, without legislative oversight.

As a small business owner, I cannot afford to keep up with constantly changing rules dictated by an unelected body with no direct experience running a farm.

Oregon's farms are already overregulated, and this bill adds another layer of government interference that will make it harder for small growers to survive.

Many of my workers value the seasonal nature of their jobs—they come to work hard during peak transplanting season and then move on to other agricultural jobs.

If I can't afford to keep my workforce, these workers will lose job opportunities, and Oregon's economy will suffer. Instead of giving workers more rights, this bill will reduce the number of available jobs and push farms toward mechanization or out-of-state competition.

House Bill 2548 is an unrealistic, one-size-fits-all mandate that does not reflect the realities of Oregon agriculture.

Thank you,

Lauren Lucht

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