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Subject: Strong Opposition to HB 2548 – A Threat to Oregon Agriculture

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB 2548, a bill that poses a significant threat to my family farm, Setniker Trading Co LLC, and to the broader agricultural community in Oregon. As a grass seed and peppermint farmer employing 18 full-time workers, I am already struggling to remain competitive in an industry that has seen mounting cost pressures. This bill would further exacerbate the challenges I face, putting my operation—and many like mine—at risk of downsizing or disappearing altogether.

A Competitive Disadvantage for Oregon Farmers

Oregon's grass seed industry is no longer the low-cost producer in this region. Rising costs, regulatory burdens, and competition from states with lower production expenses have made it increasingly difficult to sustain operations. States like Idaho and parts of the Midwest now have a competitive advantage due to lower labor costs and fewer regulatory hurdles. HB 2548 would only widen this gap, pushing more of Oregon's production elsewhere and accelerating the decline of our cropping system.

Regulatory Overreach and Increased Costs

HB 2548 creates an unelected governing body with the authority to impose new labor regulations every two years, including:

- Setting higher minimum wages and piece-rate wages
- Imposing rigid requirements on work schedules and rest breaks
- Mandating worker training by state-certified organizations
- Establishing new health and safety requirements that go beyond existing laws

Elimination of At-Will Employment: A Legal and Financial Burden

HB 2548 would also eliminate at-will employment for farmworkers, making it more difficult to discipline or terminate employees when necessary. Instead, the burden would fall on farmers like me to prove the 'reasonableness' of every termination, inviting costly litigation and opening the door for legal abuse.

Oregon's Over-Regulation is Driving Our Industry Away

Oregon agriculture is already overburdened with excessive regulation, and HB 2548 is yet another example of policy decisions that make it harder for farms to compete. One clear example is the restrictive policies on canola production in the Willamette Valley. These regulations have taken away planting options for farmers, stifling our ability to diversify crops and remain competitive in a global market.

Meanwhile, our international competitors—such as New Zealand—operate with far fewer restrictions, allowing them to produce grass seed and other crops at a lower cost. Unlike Oregon, which imposes layers of bureaucracy and restrictions on what we can grow and how we can operate, New Zealand farmers benefit from an agricultural system that prioritizes competitiveness and market access.

Impact on Farm Viability and Future of Oregon Agriculture

The ripple effects of this legislation will be felt beyond individual farms:

- Job Loss & Industry Decline: Farms will be forced to cut back on labor, reducing employment opportunities in rural Oregon.
- Reduced Crop Diversity: If grass seed production becomes too costly in Oregon, farmers will be forced to switch to other crops or leave the industry altogether.
- Consolidation & Loss of Family Farms: Increased regulation benefits only large, corporate farms that can absorb the legal and financial risks. Small and mid-sized farms like mine will struggle to compete.

A Better Path Forward

Oregon farmers already operate under some of the strictest labor and safety regulations in the country. Rather than imposing additional burdens that threaten our industry, lawmakers should focus on policies that support rural economies, strengthen farm viability, and ensure that Oregon agriculture remains competitive.

I urge you to reject HB 2548 and consider the real-world impact this legislation will have on farmers, workers, and rural communities. If we want Oregon agriculture to thrive, we must support policies that allow farmers to compete, not ones that drive them out of business.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue further and share firsthand the challenges we face.

Sincerely,

Scott Setniker

Setniker Trading Co LLC