

House Committee On Labor and Workplace Standards

HB 2548 Agricultural Workforce Labor Standards Board

Dear Chair Representative Grayber and members of the Committee,

My name is Denver Pugh and I am a 6th generation farmer in Linn County where my family grows seed crops for the forage, cover crop, and turf industries around the world. We currently have 7 full time employees and hire an additional 10 for summer harvest. I strongly urge you to oppose HB 2548 and the formation of an Agricultural Workforce Labor Standards Board.

This idea is so incredibly bad, I don't know where to even begin. Let me first start by saying that I treat all my workers as if they were family members as I know a large majority of farms do the same. We rely on our workers to do certain jobs so that we all can have a respectable lifestyle and sense of ownership in what we do. If enacted, this board will only drive divide in the already good working relationships between employer and employees. This will take all the years of good communication and report and make it so both employee and employer are either too afraid to speak to each other about pressing concerns or they just can't say anything for fear of creating hardships on either party.

Oregon agriculture is extremely diverse, from live stock production to seed production and everything in between. I don't see how forming a board and creating statewide mandates will work when you have such a diverse industry. Piece rate wages may work for some but not for others. The timing of when and how many employees that are needed very drastically between size of the farm and work needing to be done in a certain timeframe.

Making it so agriculture in Oregon is no longer an at-will employment state, which is essentially what this board will do, can actually be looked at as a safety hazard. If I deem someone is unfit to continue work but this Agricultural Workforce Labor Standards Board says otherwise and I have to continue to employ them, then who's at fault if this troubled worker injures themselves or worse yet, others? This board is not going to be on every farm 24/7 monitoring employees and they aren't going to see what we as owners see and there are times when you just have to let someone go for the betterment and safety of other employees.

I could keep addressing issues why forming this board is not a good idea but I don't want to take anymore time away from you or me on this. I do, however, want to ask, when is enough enough? Oregon Agriculture is already vastly over regulated and with standards already put into place to help the workers such as the grotesquely high minimum wage rates, Ag Overtime, and the many OSHA workplace standards rules. As a farmer, I am already stretched super thin emotionally and financially with todays economy and all the taxes and rules we have to follow. In stead of trying to create something that will only put another stress on the farmer, why don't you realize that we do care and we are the ones that could use a little help.

Sincerely,



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