

TO: House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards
FROM: Jennifer Martinez-Medina, PhD
SUBJECT: Yes on HB 2548 -2

Dear Chair Grayber, Vice-Chairs Elmer and Muñoz, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jennifer Martinez-Medina, I live in Portland and work in Salem, OR. I am writing in strong support of HB 2548 -2 to create a Farmworker Standards Board in Oregon.

There are over 72,000 Oregon farmworkers, who put food on our tables and contribute over \$6.8B to our state's economy, yet they experience poor working conditions and earn an average of just \$34,500 annually. Most farmworkers are immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala, and Central America, many of whom speak an Indigenous language.

As a person from a farmworker community who engages in research alongside agricultural workers, I have witnessed and have heard countless stories showcasing how rights and occupational standards are routinely violated by certain employers. When farmworkers attempt to exercise their rights, they are often unjustly fired or are pressured until they leave.

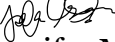
We have inherited a food system based on enslavement that has retained intact a philosophy of “ agricultural exceptionalism,” the idea that farm labor is different and therefore should not follow basic standards set in other industries. With the lack of oversight in the industry, farmworkers bear the brunt through their economic, health, and social precarity.

HB 2548 -2 will give historically excluded workers their first voice in setting industry standards with real enforcement power and accountability. The board will ensure access to fair wages, safe conditions, and protection from retaliation. When agricultural workers enjoy safe working conditions, this ensures sustainable food chains.

Cities and states across the country have proven that workforce standards boards work. These boards bring workers together with industry and public representatives to set meaningful standards, with real enforcement power to ensure accountability. From New York's farm laborers to Minnesota's nursing home staff to Seattle's domestic workers, these boards give workers the voice and protections they deserve and give our communities the essential food we need.

I urge you to vote YES on HB 2548 -2 to create a Farmworker Standards Board and give farmworkers the ability to set standards for the industry.

Sincerely,


Jennifer Martinez-Medina, PhD