

Submitter: Mary Brady
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Labor and Workplace Standards
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2548

I'm asking you to oppose HB 2548 because it threatens my ability to keep farming. Oregon already has some of the highest labor costs in the country, I can't afford more regulations and wage increases. I farm in Southern Oregon. We raise sheep, hay, timber, and some value added products. This bill would cause us to not be able to hire employees as we try to grow the farm to support our family and provide for the community. We will need to look for more mechanical means to expand. This is not the way to help employees.

This bill would give unelected bureaucrats the power to set wages and safety rules that go far beyond current protections, adding more regulatory burden to small farms like mine. Farmers know how devastating this regulatory model is. Oregon's state agencies have adopted very harmful regulations in the last five years with little to no accountability for their actions. This board would be no different; its members aren't even elected.

HB 2548 unfairly targets agriculture by taking away at-will employment, meaning I wouldn't be able to make necessary staffing decisions without the risk of costly lawsuits. One claim can cost tens of thousands of dollars or more. I also don't believe that farms should be forced keep employees who may not meet performance expectations or adapt to the demands of the job. All other sectors in Oregon would be at-will, but farms—whose employment needs are impacted by weather, yields, trade, pests, diseases, etc.—would not. Not only is that unfair, but it will likely result in job loss, not job security.

This bill doesn't help workers or consumers; it just makes farming harder and more expensive.

I just saw the -2 amendment, and it creates a very biased Board. The proposed Board would rubber stamp any new regulation - regardless of farmers' ability to pay. It requires training for all employees and new hires but only allows unions to provide it; I don't understand how that would work for a seasonal workforce. Also, the new amendment allows workers to claim emotional damages and does not even allow farm employers a fair defense, as only plaintiffs' attorneys could recover their fees. It's a recipe for needless and costly litigation against farm families.

I urge you to vote no against this punitive bill to protect local farms and jobs.