

Chair Graber, V.Chairs Elmer and Munoz and members of this committee,

As a rancher in Eastern Oregon, I am adamantly opposed to HB 2548 and I strongly encourage you to oppose it as well.

When I began writing this testimony, it was difficult to know where to begin. There are so many factors that make this a very frightening and threatening bill that you all will be considering and I sincerely hope you will take the time to read through the provided testimonies from so very many Oregonian citizens across our state.

While the intentions of the sponsors may seem noble and justified they are not founded on facts or reality. Oregon is in the top ten states in our nation in wages paid to employees. Oregon has very strict OSHA rules, overtime benefits, employee housing requirements, safety precautions, and the list goes on.

The economic hardships and the burdens of overreaching regulations from HB 2548 would be unsustainable for the agriculture industry. We are losing generational farms and ranches in this state because of unnecessary requirements that have been imposed by individuals advocating for unrealistic regulations such as this. They clearly lack an understanding of the complexities of farming and ranching that we in the business on a daily basis understand so very well. This is not a 9 to 5 work day. We can't decide to stay inside if it's 17 below zero and a blizzard. We can't decide to pass on the added costs incurred because of new regulations and requirements. We can't let our product rot in storage until the price comes up. Our livestock is tended to on a daily routine even when we are sick. The financial picture can be and is very bleak for agriculture. We make decisions daily on how to do the best we can with the meager dollar amount we have to operate on. Our days are hard, stressful and multifaceted. But the one thing we do know is that we love our way of life, we love taking care of our land and resources so we can pass our farms and ranches on to the next generation and we love those who work for and help us provide the food that you all need for sustenance. We are not heartless and abusive to those who come to work and toil alongside us. We must be allowed to have the flexibility to operate the way we know best for our farms and ranches. This ludicrous bill is more of the government overreach and regulations that have helped put Oregon agriculture in the predicament that we see today. I ask you, how many of these unelected boards that are creating requirements are truly effective? How many of these unelected boards have people on them that truly know and understand all the intricacies of the business they are dictating too? How many of these boards have done irreparable harm to the very entity they were supposedly created to "help?" This is nothing more than manufactured political red tape, bureaucracy, and regulations implying that we need to fix a problem that doesn't exist. When our family owned and operated farms and ranches disappear one will see large, automated corporate businesses that will minimize the need for employees and will certainly not have the welfare of those we hire at heart.

At first glance this appears to be an innocuous bill that is beneficial to everyone. Please read and understand the ramifications and threats to Oregon agriculture if HB2548 is passed. We cannot and must not allow this bill to pass into law. Please read the letters of opposition and listen to testimony to see clearly why we are taking time out of our busy day to react and respond to this very unnecessary house bill.

Thank you,
Cheryl Martin
VP Ranch
North Powder, OR 97867

