



March 12, 2025

To: House Committee On Labor and Workplace Standards

From: Deanna Palm, President and CEO of the Washington County Chamber of Commerce

Re: Opposition to HB 2548

Dear Chair Grayber, Vice-Chairs Tran and Lewis, and Members of the House Committee On Labor and Workplace Standards,

On behalf of the Washington County Chamber of Commerce, which represents over 75,000 jobs in our community, we appreciate the Legislature's dedication to ensuring fair labor standards and protections for workers across Oregon. Agricultural workers play a vital role in our state's economy, and their well-being is a priority for the businesses and industries that rely on them.

However, we must respectfully **oppose House Bill 2548** due to the unintended consequences it could have on Oregon's agricultural sector and the broader business community. This bill proposes the establishment of an Agricultural Workforce Labor Standards Board, which would have unilateral authority to set wages, benefits, and workplace conditions. We are concerned that it would create regulatory uncertainty, increase costs, and limit the flexibility employers need to operate successfully—all of which could ultimately impact workers and consumers alike.

Oregon's agricultural community is already facing an unprecedented level of economic uncertainty and operational challenges. Rising costs, supply chain disruptions, workforce shortages, and shifting market demands have placed enormous pressure on farms, ranches, and agribusinesses. **Additionally, the imposition of federal tariffs has created further instability, particularly for agricultural producers who rely on export markets.** Many of these businesses are already struggling to remain competitive, and additional state-level regulatory burdens could further jeopardize their ability to operate, leading to job losses and higher food prices for Oregon families. **Now is not the time to add more uncertainty to an industry that is critical to our state's economy.**

Additionally, this bill would eliminate at-will employment for agricultural workers, fundamentally altering the employment landscape in ways that could lead to unintended consequences, including increased legal disputes and reduced flexibility for both workers and employers. While worker protections are important, a collaborative approach that engages all stakeholders—including policymakers, business leaders, and agricultural

employees—would be a more effective way to address concerns while maintaining a healthy economic climate.

The Washington County Chamber of Commerce believes that constructive dialogue is essential in shaping policies that work for both employees and employers. Given the fragility of Oregon's agricultural industry, we urge the Legislature to prioritize economic stability and competitiveness while exploring ways to support workers. We would welcome the opportunity to engage in further discussions to identify balanced solutions that protect agricultural employees while ensuring the long-term sustainability of Oregon's farms and agribusinesses.

For these reasons, we urge the committee to oppose HB 2548 and consider alternative approaches that protect workers while preserving economic stability. We appreciate your time and leadership on these important issues and look forward to working together to support Oregon's workforce and business community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Deanna Palm". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Deanna" and the last name "Palm" clearly distinguishable.

Deanna Palm  
President & CEO  
Washington County Chamber of Commerce