

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

Dear Members of the House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Bill 2548, which proposes the establishment of the Agricultural Workforce Labor Standards Board and introduces significant changes to employment practices within Oregon's agricultural sector.

As someone who grew up on a multigenerational family farm, I deeply value Oregon's rich agricultural heritage and the vital role that small farms and ranches play in our state's economy and communities. Family farms often operate on thin margins, facing challenges such as labor shortages, fluctuating market prices, and increasing regulatory demands. The additional burdens imposed by HB 2548 could exacerbate these challenges, potentially leading to the closure of many family-run operations.

One of the most concerning aspects of HB 2548 is the elimination of at-will employment for agricultural workers, requiring "just cause" for termination. This shift would expose small farms to increased litigation risks and associated costs, which many cannot afford. The Oregon State Chamber of Commerce has highlighted that the average settlement of an employment claim can cost around \$75,000 before even reaching court—a financial burden that could be devastating for small farms.

Furthermore, the bill proposes the creation of an unelected board with the authority to set wages, work schedules, and other employment conditions. This could lead to one-size-fits-all mandates that do not account for the diverse needs and capacities of small farms, further threatening their viability.

It's important to note that Oregon already has robust labor protections in place. The introduction of HB 2548 would add layers of bureaucracy and regulatory complexity, disproportionately affecting small farms that lack the resources to navigate these new requirements.

In conclusion, while the intent of HB 2548 to protect agricultural workers is commendable, the bill's provisions would likely have unintended consequences that harm the very fabric of Oregon's agricultural community. I urge you to consider the detrimental impact this legislation could have on small farms and ranches and to vote against HB 2548.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Schurter