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Oregon House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards
900 Court St. NE
Rm. 140A
Salem, OR 97301

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Ian Chandler and together with my wife Patricia, we are the owner/operators of CE Farm Management LLC. We are an underserved minority and veteran-owned agricultural business that operates in Wasco County, Oregon. We currently farm approximately 200 acres of cherries and pears. During our cherry harvest we employ approximately 120 seasonal employees and 4 year round employees. We are writing today in opposition to HB 2548.

My wife Patricia is a native of Nayarit, Mexico and immigrated here when she was 15 years old and together with her family had the very common struggles that immigrants to the United States have to face. That lived experience has shaped our views on equity and social justice to a great extent. As a company and moral human beings, we work hard to always put the wellbeing of our employees as one of our primary objectives. That also has formed the basis of how we work hard to provide safe, equitable, and dignified employment for everyone that works with us. I have also served since 2015 on the board of directors for One Community Health, our local Federally Qualified Health Clinic that is at the forefront of providing medical care and support for our farmworker population in the Columbia River Gorge. We understand intimately the barriers, struggles, and inequities that exist in the state of Oregon. HB 2548 would basically cut the meaningful relationships that our company has built with our workforce over the years, to replace it with an unelected oversight governing body to tell us how things are supposed to be. This bill would create an unelected Ag Standards Board appointed by the governor, that would have the power to impose rules and regulations on Oregon agriculture.

Like many citizens of this country we have watched with alarm as an unelected federal oversight body called the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) has created chaos by cutting USDA programs and researchers that directly affect our industry's sustainability. DOGE has caused this chaos by not recognizing the organizational differences or truly understanding what they are even cutting. Thinking that there is a one size fits all solution can be disastrous. HB 2548 seems to do the same thing only at the state level, by bringing in non-subject matter experts to dictate how agriculture is run in the state of Oregon. We are against this at the federal level and against this at the state level. Agriculture in Oregon is incredibly diverse in complexity, type, and economic model.

We provide living wages and our housing completely free of charge to our employees as a benefit to them, and as a way to ensure that we have a reliable harvest workforce each year. We are proud of the fact that our high quality housing is a draw for return workers every year, and we have built lasting relationships with our employees. All of our units have flush toilets, showers, laundry machines, WIFI internet, air conditioning/heaters, insulation, and adequate cooking space. Our labor housing camps are Oregon OSHA compliant and registered, have had no violations, and no complaints have been submitted to OSHA. Our questions are, what is driving the need for these changes? How will these changes make things safer for our workers? We have had no complaints from BOLI? What is driving the need for HB 2548? Why is agriculture in Oregon being targeted? What data is there that shows that HB 2548 is needed? Do any of the sponsors of this bill understand the complexities of running a cherry farm or any other agricultural business?

As a farm in Oregon, we currently work under rules established by the Bureau of Labor and Industry, the Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services(Oregon OSHA), the Oregon Department of Agriculture, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Oregon Department of Revenue, and the State of Oregon Employment Department. That is in addition to industry food safety and labor standards that are self imposed by our industry so that we can sell our products. It is a lot to manage for a small business. If an unelected Ag Oversight Board is needed as outlined in HB 2548, what then is the purpose of all of the other regulatory agencies? This bill also seems to undermine the efforts of the civil servants of the state of Oregon that are currently responsible for enforcement of the laws and regulations that currently govern our industry. Is there data that shows that these agencies are currently ineffective at enforcing state standards?

We believe that HB 2548 comes from a genuine desire to help farmworkers, but is misguided and creates redundant layers of regulation that will not result in any improvements. What is the ultimate goal of HB 2548 and what are the metrics that will be used to gauge success? If there are no clear measurable goals then, like many initiatives this will just add another ineffective layer of burden upon an already struggling industry. Data shows that areas where farmworkers and their families are struggling are access to health care, affordable housing, food security, education, and immigration reform. We implore the Oregon Legislature to focus on these important issues. HB 2548 does not address any of these issues.

In closing, we would like to express our strong opposition to HB 2548. We live and work in unity with our family, friends and neighbors who are farm workers. Please don't impose and destroy the culture of respect and dignity that we have fostered, by imposing a one size fits all solution that does not recognize the complexities of our industry. Farmers and farmworkers are natural allies. Please don't drive a wedge in a successful relationship. My wife and I cordially invite any members of this sub-committee to visit our farm to understand the complexities and uniqueness of our industry. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Ian P. Chandler

CE Farm Management LLC