



Salem Chamber

Convener | Catalyst | Champion

March 13, 2025

Representative Dacia Grayber, Chair

House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards

Oregon State Legislature

900 Court St. NE, Salem, OR 97301

RE: Salem Chamber Written Testimony in Opposition of HB 2548

Dear Chair Grayber, Vice-Chair Elmer, Vice-Chair Muñoz, and Members of the House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards,

Our organization represents over one thousand (1,000+) local businesses and forty-five thousand (45,000) employees in the Salem area. The breadth and diversity of industries represented by our membership demonstrate an intersection of the small businesses that collectively create our state economy. The Salem Chamber supports a healthy business climate, including fair labor practices, which incentivize employees and employers to partner together for economic growth.

We're concerned because HB 2548 adds another bureaucratic mechanism where Oregon's Bureau of Labor and Industries already serves alongside our state and federal statutes and regulations. Agricultural employees are already covered by the FLSA, Oregon's minimum wage laws, Oregon Sick Leave, OFLA, Oregon Paid Family and Medical Leave, including state and federal protections for disability accommodations, anti-discrimination, harassment, retaliation, Unemployment Insurance Benefits, worker's compensation, retirement, and safe working conditions under OSHA and Oregon's Occupational Safety and Health under DCBS.

Another concern is changing employee status from "at-will" to "for cause" under Section 12. Oregon's private sector, absent contracts, employees operate under an "at-will" status and changing this to "for cause" is a dramatic departure from the current regulatory and legal landscape. For instance, employees can already litigate wrongful termination and are protected from retaliation due to reporting a perceived statutory or regulatory violation by their employer. The reason for this unequal treatment of agricultural employers, when all other private sector industries operate with "at-will" employees, is confusing. Requiring progressive discipline for small family farms almost necessitates family farms hire an HR company to ensure compliance.

HB 2548 will lead to higher operating costs, and small agricultural businesses cannot simply raise the price of their products. Oregon agricultural products are sold at commodity-based pricing dictated by supply, demand, weather, market conditions, pests, diseases, trade, and many other variables outside the control of the producer. With razor-thin profit margins, these proposed changes threaten the economic vitality of our small agricultural businesses and the ancillary businesses that support them. The likelihood of large corporate farms buying these smaller Oregon farms will increase as many sell under pressure. We already have an Agri-Stress Helpline for overwhelmed small farmers and agricultural producers because we have recognized the immense strain these small businesses are under, please reconsider HB 2548 as drafted.

Respectfully,

Tom Hoffert, CEO Salem Area Chamber of Commerce

**Salem Area Chamber
of Commerce**

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Tom Hoffert
Salem Area Chamber of Commerce