



March 12, 2025

Chair Grayber, Vice-Chairs Elmer and Muñoz, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ira Cuello-Martinez and I am the policy advocacy director at Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste or PCUN, Oregon's Farmworker Union. I am testifying in strong support of HB 2548 -2 to create an agricultural workforce standards board and establish just cause protections for farmworkers.

Farmworkers do the important and often dangerous work that fuels one of Oregon's largest economic sectors, putting food on tables and proving Oregon's power as an agricultural state ready to compete on an international stage. Rain or shine, in the snow and in the heat, farmworkers show up to Oregon farms as their workplaces, picking fruit, tending to livestock, and plowing fields. Yet despite their tireless work, farmworkers are excluded from the federal right to collectively bargain free from retaliation, such as being fired or disciplined.

We believe that every worker deserves a voice in creating safe, fair, and sustainable working conditions. Our members have shared experiences of poor working conditions, low wages, and unjust terminations. While I cannot go through all of their stories in my limited time, you will get a chance to hear directly from farmworkers about their support for this bill and I encourage you to read the testimonies on the record from people who do this job day in and day out.

Creating an agricultural workforce standards board will help facilitate discussions between employers and workers to review and set standards for the industry. The board is designed to have a collaborative space between farmers, farmworkers, and relevant agencies to set standards that make sense for the agricultural industry. The board will study the unique characteristics of agriculture in Oregon, research the impacts and implications of different standards, and ensure a strong and vibrant workforce for generations to come. For farmworkers, a standards board will create their first-ever voice in setting industry standards, correcting historic exclusions.

Cities and states across the country have proven that workforce standards boards work. The models in Minnesota for care workers and California for fast food workers ensure that the boards have rulemaking authority so that individuals who directly work in the industry are the ones who are setting the standards. Empowering farmworkers and farmers to make decisions about any standards that are adopted is key in this process.

Lastly, the board would be tasked with developing uniform training standards to ensure that farmworkers and supervisors are informed about any standards adopted by the board, retaliation protections, how the board functions, and how to report labor violations. These

training standards are not meant to train farmworkers on the specific duties of their agricultural work rather they will be trained on their rights as a worker.

While neither this Legislative Assembly nor this committee created the exclusion of farmworkers from the right to collectively bargain, you have the opportunity today to move forward in passing the agricultural workforce standards board and take a step to addressing this exclusion.

I urge you to vote yes for House Bill 2548 -2 to give Oregon's farmworkers a voice in setting standards for the industry.

Thank you.

Ira Cuello-Martinez
Policy Advocacy Director
PCUN