

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

Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my deep concerns regarding House Bill 2548, which proposes the establishment of the Agricultural Workforce Labor Standards Board and mandates new labor regulations for Oregon's farms. While I support fair working conditions for agricultural workers, I strongly urge the Legislature to consider the negative impact this bill will have on family farms and small agricultural businesses across the state.

As someone who understands the realities of agriculture in Oregon, I know firsthand that family farms already operate on razor-thin margins. HB 2548, while well-intended, introduces costly and restrictive mandates that could force many farms out of business. Key concerns include:

Higher Operating Costs Will Hurt Small Farms

The bill mandates higher wages and benefits, including hazard pay, paid leave, and retirement benefits.

These additional costs will hit small farms the hardest, as they lack the financial resources of large corporate agribusinesses.

Unrealistic Employment Restrictions

The ban on at-will employment will make it difficult to manage seasonal labor, which is essential in farming.

Requiring progressive discipline policies for terminations adds legal risks and administrative burdens for farm owners.

A Competitive Disadvantage Against Larger Operations

Large-scale farms may be able to absorb these new costs, but family farms will struggle to compete.

This bill could lead to consolidation in agriculture, reducing opportunities for small, independent farmers.

Potential Food Price Increases & Loss of Local Jobs

Higher labor costs will lead to higher prices for consumers.

If farms cannot afford to comply, they may cut back on hiring, leading to fewer job opportunities for farmworkers—the very people this bill aims to protect.

The reality is that family farms in Oregon care about their workers and already provide safe, fair employment within the constraints of seasonal work and economic pressures. Rather than implementing one-size-fits-all mandates, I encourage the Legislature to seek collaborative solutions that balance worker protections with farm

viability.

I urge you to vote NO on HB 2548 and instead work with the agricultural community to develop reasonable labor policies that protect both workers and Oregon's small farms. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Wallis