

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

Hello,

My name is Mike Eder and I am a 37 year old 2nd generation farmer. I am writing this testimony to you today to express my concerns on how HB2548 would have a large negative impact on the agriculture industry here in Oregon. Within our farm, diversification is what has allowed us to continue the farm to another generation. With diversification comes labor. We grow a variety of vegetable crops as well as specialty seeds, which has kept our farm alive through the years. What gives us the ability to be so diversified is our employees. Some of our employees have worked for our farm for over 30 years with a couple closing in on 40. If we did not treat our workers well I truly believe that they would quit and find an operation where they felt more valued. Without our employees that work season after season with us we would not be as efficient or successful.

We recognize that we are extremely fortunate to have such a great team of employees to work with but, I fear that with the passing of this bill it may make it more difficult to continue this culture. Farming is a unique profession in many ways. We are "price takers" and not "price makers". We are different than just about every other industry in that we have to try and make a living with what everyone gives us rather than what we can control. Compared to every other industry, we do not set our prices. Our prices are controlled by the markets and the companies we grow for rather than by us. Besides profitability, our other challenge is competition. The world we live in is getting smaller by the day and we have to compete with other countries that have much lower wages and regulations. While shipping and tariffs are not always cheap, it is something that can be passed along to the consumer.

Besides competition and keeping our farm somewhat profitable enough to continue, I fear what this bill will do for our employees. We already start new employees higher than minimum wage and have given raises every year to keep up with the cost of living. Besides raises and a higher starting wage we give Christmas bonus' to all of our employees to show appreciation for all their hard work through the season in order to keep our family farm in business. Besides what we do that is over and above the requirements, they have already seen some reductions. We now have to consider overtime and at the end of the week decide if whats left is worth the overtime. At the end of the work day or weekend any leftover irrigation is left to me. I have 4 young daughters and this does get hard on the family but I am willing to do it to make sure that our employees get the rest and time they need with their families as well. I used to offer optional work on weekends to any of our employees that wanted to earn more, but that now is not an option because the cost of overtime it is

starting to get too expensive. Overtime and regulations is forcing us to really think about if certain crops are worth raising anymore. Along with crop selection it is also forcing us to mechanize which will decrease our need for labor in the future.

Finally, this bill feels as if its targeting and discriminating against farms. Are we not concerned about minimum wage workers in the service industry? We offer full-time work with pay over minimum wage, and I know we are not alone in this practice after talking with other farms in our area. Our employees health and safety is always a top priority and we have open communications with our workers to check on everyone's well-being and I believe this is why we have maintained our employees through the years. Please consider opposing this bill. We are a small operation and this makes us really think if having employees is worth it or if we should consolidate to something that just our family can handle. Farms need healthy workers just as workers need healthy farms. Thank you.