

## Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 2548

Presented to the Oregon House Committee on Business and Labor

March 13, 2025

### Chair Grayber and Members of the Committee:

My name is Matt Miller, and I am a hazelnut grower in Hubbard, Oregon. I am here today to express my **strong opposition** to House Bill 2548, which would impose costly and unnecessary labor mandates that will **severely harm Oregon's family farms**—especially those of us in the hazelnut industry.

Oregon is the nation's leader in hazelnut production, with over **1000 family farms growing 99% of the U.S. supply**, Hazelnut farming is **highly seasonal**, requiring flexible labor to **prune in winter, maintain orchards in summer, and harvest in fall**. HB 2548 ignores the realities of seasonal farm work and **places excessive burdens on small and mid-sized farms**, making it harder for us to stay in business.

Hazelnut orchards rely on **seasonal and part-time workers** for essential tasks like **harvest, pruning, and maintenance**. HB 2548's **ban on at-will employment** and its **"for cause" termination requirement** make it nearly impossible to **adjust to changing labor needs**.

- If a worker is not showing up on time or performing safely, I need to **make quick decisions** to keep my operation running smoothly.
- Being forced to follow a **progressive disciplinary process** for seasonal workers is **bureaucratic and impractical** for a farm that hires short-term labor.

Hazelnut prices fluctuate from year to year based on global markets. Unlike other industries, as farmers we are price takers, **we can't simply raise the sale price of our crop** to cover increased labor costs. HB 2548's mandates—including **paid leave, severance pay, hazard pay, and retirement benefits**—will **devastate small and mid-sized farms**.

- Many hazelnut orchards are **multi-generational family farms**, and we operate on **razor-thin margins**.
- Large corporate farms may absorb these costs, but **family farms like mine will struggle to survive**.

HB 2548 creates an **Agricultural Workforce Labor Standards Board** with unchecked power to **set wages, impose new labor rules, and regulate our businesses** without input from elected lawmakers.

- As a farmer, I already comply with **state and federal labor laws**
- This board will create **ever-changing and unpredictable regulations**, making it even harder for farmers to plan ahead.

If this bill passes, I—and many other farmers—will be **forced to reduce hiring, cut hours, or move toward mechanization.**

- Instead of helping workers, this bill will **leave them with fewer jobs** and force them to look elsewhere for seasonal work.

Oregon's hazelnut growers take pride in treating workers fairly, but **HB 2548 is not the right approach. It ignores the realities of seasonal agriculture, imposes unnecessary costs, and creates burdensome regulations that will put farms out of business.**

I urge this committee to **oppose HB 2548** and focus on supporting Oregon's agriculture industry.

Thank you,

Matt Miller