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To: House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards
From: Martha Sonato, Oregon Law Center
Re: Support for HB 2541
Date: 3/19/2025

Chair Grayber, Vice-Chairs Elmer and Muñoz, and members of the committee,

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center, I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of [HB 2541](#), which would extend workplace milk expression protections to farmworker women who are currently excluded.

The Oregon Law Center provides free legal assistance to low-income Oregonians, including agricultural workers, who face unique challenges in accessing workplace protections.

This bill is a simple and impactful fix that can make a big difference in building healthier communities across Oregon. Right now, workplace milk expression protections apply to most farmworker communities. However, there is a small group of farmworker women who are left out. **These women meet all the following criteria: they work as hand harvesters or pruning laborers, are paid on a piece-rate basis, commute daily to work from a permanent residence, and have worked in agriculture for less than 13 weeks in the previous year (about three months).**

Workplace milk expression protections have been in place since 2005, with two revisions since then. They require employers to provide reasonable breaks for employees to express breast milk until the child is 18 months old. These breaks should align with the employee's needs, and while the law encourages coordination with regular rest and meal periods, it's not mandatory. Employers must also provide a private space, close to the employee's work area, for milk expression. Employers with ten or fewer employees may be exempt if providing these breaks would cause an "undue hardship." We want to make sure that mothers, especially those in farmworker communities, can express milk in the workplace when they need to do so.

HB 2541: Good for babies, mothers, and employers

Lactation breaks are crucial for babies. Breast milk provides essential nutrients and immune-boosting antibodies that support better health. While about 83% of mothers

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start breastfeeding after giving birth, this number drops significantly by six months.¹ Providing workplace milk expression protections helps mothers breastfeed longer and makes it easier for them to balance work and nursing. For employers, offering lactation accommodations leads to happier employees, lower turnover rates, and greater productivity. Employees feel valued and supported, which benefits everyone.

HB 2541 is a simple but important step in closing the gap and making sure that all farmworker women can express milk at work. By passing this bill, we can make a real difference for farmworker women and their families.

We urge this committee to support HB 2541.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Martha Sonato
Legislative Advocate
Oregon Law Center

¹ [https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding-data/breastfeeding-report-card/index.html#:~:text=What%20the%20numbers%20tell%20us&text=Among%20infants%20born%20in%202019,milk%20exclusively%20\(Figure%201\).](https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding-data/breastfeeding-report-card/index.html#:~:text=What%20the%20numbers%20tell%20us&text=Among%20infants%20born%20in%202019,milk%20exclusively%20(Figure%201).)

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