



A STRONG VOICE FOR OREGON'S WORKERS

TO: Chair Taylor
Vice-Chair Bonham
Members of the Committee
FR: Catie Theisen, Oregon AFL-CIO
RE: SB 999 Opposition

April 8, 2025

The Oregon AFL-CIO represents 300,000 workers across Oregon and is a voice for all workers in the legislative process. Oregon's farmworkers are the backbone of one of the largest sectors in our economy. Yet, as other workplace protections have increased over the past 50 years, Oregon's farm workers remain excluded from some of the most basic protections other sectors of the economy have been subject to for sometimes nearly a century.

Oregon OSHA's Agricultural Labor Housing (ALH) rule (OAR 437-004-1120), established in 1998, applies to any housing provided by an employer recruiting workers for agricultural jobs. Under current regulations, farmworker housing must be registered with Oregon OSHA, unless single dwellings, and small occupancy units occupied solely by members of the same family or by five or fewer unrelated individuals. Even though they don't have to register, they do still need to be in compliance with the health and safety rules, this has been the case for years.

SB 999, with the -2 amendment, seeks to amend the Safe Employment Act (ORS 654.001) to exclude certain types of housing from being considered places of employment, specifically Specifically, single-family, isolated dwellings occupied solely by members of the same family or by five or fewer unrelated individuals, and hotels or motels that provide housing on a commercial basis to the general public under the same terms as to workers.

Far too often, these housing units are far short of the basic health and safety rules set by OSHA or tenant landlord law. Ultimately, any housing that is contingent on continued agricultural employment – which is true most if not all of the time in these scenarios – should be subject to workplace health and safety law governed by OSHA.

SB 999-2 proposes sweeping changes to ag labor housing in general and to who these rules apply to. Under this proposal, farmworkers would lose critical protections. Unlike the months of OSHA rule-making to get to the updated rules, this legislation was poorly thought out and hastily done before the deadline from a worker advocate perspective. Something this critical to the lives of farmworkers should be well considered and thought out - we encourage your opposition of SB 999