

Submitter: Linda Barrett
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2548
Legislators,

This testimony opposes -7 amendment and HB 2548. Specifically, I oppose creation of a board with “authority to increase wage rates, set rest breaks and work hours, and layer on OR-OSHA regulations for local farms with NO accountability for the consequences.” The most onerous aspect of the proposed legislation is its elimination of “at-will employment for agriculture.” If a board of unelected individuals dictates how and when farms can make necessary employment decisions or intervenes in employer/employee negotiations, it undermines the very structure of our free market. It ultimately harasses employers and disadvantages people who seek employment. It torpedoes the independence, quality of life, and ability to create and contribute to the greater good, of those individuals participating in the workforce.

HB 2548 is a terrible idea.

I think it would be appropriate for the proponents of this legislation to offer illustrations of where such a construction of government oversight and intervention has had a successful track record, and by what metrics the success was determined. Brilliant economists such as Thomas Sowell have challenged this kind of government intervention as short-sighted and very detrimental.

The presumptions of harm suggested as justification for this legislation are far too expansive or broad to be accurate. Further, such presumptions overlook legal protections for workers that already exist, should there be instances of detrimental conditions for workers.

I argue employers already are at a disadvantage economically and legislatively. Oregon lawmakers and administrators continue to penalize those who take the risk of competing in the marketplace and then wonder at the financial repercussions to the state. The proposed legislation is another high-cost idea – a high cost for employers, a high cost to the dignity and independence of both workers and employers, a high cost to the state in terms of reduced productivity and fiscal reliability.

I recommend a NO vote on the proposed -7 amendment and to HB 2548 in toto.

