

Subject: Testimony in Support of HB 2548- 7

Chair Bowman, Vice-Chairs Drazan and Pham, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Emileni Lopez, and I am writing to express my strong support for HB 2548-7, which would authorize a necessary study on the workplace experiences of Oregon farmworkers, led by Portland State University.

Unfortunately, the policy for a much needed Farmworker Standards Board will not be advancing this year, but that does not make the needs and realities of farmworkers any less urgent. Oregon's farmworkers are the backbone of our state's economy, but more importantly, they are essential and incredibly valuable members of our community.

I speak not just as an advocate, but as the daughter of farmworkers. My dad has worked Oregon's fields for as long as I can remember, and I have seen firsthand the sacrifices he makes to ensure we all have food on our tables, not solely our family but yours too. Farmworkers endure physically demanding and often hazardous conditions with meager pay, much of the time in silence, because their voices are too often ignored in policy conversations, similarly to what is happening now.

This study is a critical opportunity to change that. It is an essential step toward documenting the realities farmworkers face every day. Community members and policymakers alike need a clear understanding of what protections exist and are missing, what working conditions truly look like on the ground, what barriers workers face when trying to assert their rights, and what improvements are urgently needed to ensure health, safety, fair wages, and dignity across all agricultural workplaces.

Led by Portland State University, this research will center farmworker voices, voices that have been historically marginalized, and bring invaluable knowledge to light. It will help everyone, especially policymakers, truly understand the gaps in existing protections and inform future efforts to create and strengthen the standards that would allow Oregon's farmworkers not only survive, but to flourish like all other workers.

This research is about justice. Farmworkers deserve to be heard and have their lived experiences shape the policies that directly affect them.

I urge you to pass HB 2548-7 and invest in learning directly from Oregon's most valuable workers, farmworkers. We must listen and honor their experiences on the road to worker justice.

Sincerely,
Emileni Lopez