

TO: House Committee on Rules

FROM: Seth Johnstone

SUBJECT: Yes on HB 2548 -7

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

My name is Seth Johnstone, I work at Basic Rights Oregon and I am writing testimony in strong support of HB 2548 -7 to conduct a study on Oregon farmworkers and learn about their experiences at the workplace.

There are over 72,000 Oregon farmworkers and the -7 amendment calls for the state to conduct a study on Oregon farmworkers and learn about their experiences in the workplace. Farmworkers are the backbone of our \$6.4 billion agricultural industry. This study will be a first step in an effort to keep farmworkers safe as well as describing how agricultural labor is an essential and critical industry in Oregon. Most farmworkers are immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala, and Central America, many of whom speak an Indigenous language.

Farmworkers and farmworker advocates brought forward a policy to establish a workforce standards board in Oregon. Unfortunately, it is not moving forward this session. While farmworkers and immigrants face attacks from the federal administration, the Oregon legislature has the opportunity to learn about the challenges farmworkers are facing.

HB 2548 -7 will help inform the legislature and the general public about the conditions that farmworkers are facing in the workplace. By funding a study through Portland State University, this bill puts the voices of workers at the center of policymaking while also including the perspectives of farmers. This is how we create lasting, effective change through listening, research, and engagement.

Without the report to demonstrate the issues facing farmworkers, we cannot move forward creating a standards board and farmworkers will continue to face workplace challenges. I urge you to support HB 2548 with the -7 amendment and invest in Oregon's ability to understand and serve the people who feed our state.

Sincerely,

Seth Johnstone, on behalf of Basic Rights Oregon