



RE: TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO THE -7 AMENDMENT TO HB 2548

May 29, 2025

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to the -7 amendment to HB 2548.

The Oregon Seed Council is a trade organization that brings together seed farmers, marketers, brokers, researchers, and others involved in the Oregon seed industry from when the seed is planted to when the seed ultimately makes it to the hands of consumers.

The Oregon seed industry, like others in agriculture, is struggling to grapple with the impacts of recent legislative and regulatory actions such as ag overtime. At the same time, our producers are navigating a tough market, increased costs of production, and recovery from recent years of poor yields — in part, due to lost tools for crop management at the regulatory level. Our producers find themselves in a difficult position stepping away from the land they have carefully stewarded for generations, struggling to feed their families, or trying to persist in a time where all cards feel stacked against them.

While the amendment does not immediately implement the sweeping, one-size-fits-all mandate proposed in the base bill of HB 2548, we have significant concerns about the -7 amendment as well as the intended outcome of the proposal.

The proposed amendment would provide funding through the Higher Education Coordinating Commission for the Center for Public Service at Portland State University to conduct a study examining the labor standards and working experiences of farmworkers in this state and evaluating the adequacy and availability of existing workplace protections for farmworkers. Two separate reports are mandated to be due to the Legislature. The first in May of 2026 and the second/final report due December of 2026.

The -7 amendment outlines a number of requirements for the report including areas such as hourly and piece-rate compensation, work schedules, access to benefits such as health insurance and retirement programs, financial security, as well as the availability of training and educational opportunities.

Several concerns we have on this policy include:

EXCLUSION OF OREGON'S LAND GRANT UNIVERSITY

- The proposed study excludes Oregon State University, our state's land grant university, that has intimate knowledge of all facets of our agricultural sectors, including crop diversity of the industry. OSU extension reaches all corners of the state with its extension program supported by the state of Oregon - that reach and the relationships are not reflected in the proposal.



EXCLUSION OF STATE/INDUSTRY CONNECTION

- The proposed study excludes the Oregon Department of Agriculture, a state entity that interfaces with Oregon's more than 220 commodities, which are diverse in terms of production process, season, harvest, labor, and equipment.

DOES NOT FACTOR IN DIVERSITY OF CROPS OR CROP PRODUCTION

- The proposed amendment does not incorporate the full scope of diversity of Oregon's 220+ commodities and their production processes, equipment, and seasons.

LACKS STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- Stakeholders, and those with intimate knowledge of the industry, including producers, were not engaged in development of the base bill or the amendment.

BIASED STUDY INTENDED TO PRODUCE A PRE-DETERMINED OUTCOME

- The language and construct of the study in the proposed amendment are intended to tee up the policy for the 2027 Legislative Session with a pre-determined outcome. The study is biased against Oregon agricultural producers and does not recognize the significant cost of the proposed policy of a workforce standard board. It does not provide meaningful data to assess whether a proposed workforce standard board will lead to higher wages or improved work experience, instead the study would collect qualitative data without context or causality. Taxpayer dollars will be used to support the proponent's policy narrative to pass a workforce standard board in the 2027 Legislative Session.

STUDY DOES NOT CHANGE FARM ECONOMICS

- Producers are price takers, and unlike other industries, costs cannot simply be passed on. Farmers are working on thin-to-sometimes-negative margins, and this type of pre-determined policy plan will cause crushing regulatory, financial, and liability implications that threaten the viability of the seed industry as a whole. For some, this policy will push them to the edge – diminishing vital resources in our rural communities. Over the last five years, there has been a six percent loss of farmland in Oregon - and 65 percent of farms operating in Oregon saw a net cash loss in 2022.

The Oregon Seed Council urges the committee to reject HB 2548 and the -7 amendment.

Megan Chuinard
Executive Director
Oregon Seed Council