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

I am writing to express Cala Farms Inc's opposition to the -7 amendment to HB 2548.

We are a multi-generation farm that realizes the importance of our employees and the role they play in Oregon agriculture. We employ the best and offer very competitive pay and benefits. This shows in the longevity that our employees have invested into our company. The truth is though, we are not unlike our neighbors and peers across the state. Everyone that I visit at conventions and gatherings agree that our workforce is vital to the work and products that we produce and we as an industry take care of who does that work.

I have significant concerns about the -7 amendment and the base bill.

The -7 amendment proposes to spend taxpayer dollars on a study to be conducted by Portland State University that would focus on labor standards and working conditions of farmworkers.

I am concerned that the bill excludes a number of important partners in development of a study that are intimately connected to agriculture. Oregon State University, our state's land grant university which has strong connections to and knowledge of all facets of our agricultural sectors, including crop diversity of the industry is excluded. 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. Additionally, the Oregon Department of Agriculture, who producers, like Cala Farms Inc work with on a regular basis is not consulted in this study.

As a producer, I navigate the complex and robust workforce protections and employment practices that our Legislature, agencies, and federal partners put in place, and am concerned that this study focuses on qualitative data rather than cause and effect data - or the impact of what a workforce standard board would do to Oregon's agricultural industries and the adverse impacts it will have for workers.

It is clear the proponents intend to use this biased study to tee up the policy for the 2027 Legislative Session with a pre-determined outcome already baked.

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 outcome 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 farm land in Oregon - and 65 percent of farms operating in Oregon saw a net cash loss in 2022.

It is clear that proponents of the bill - both the workforce standard board and the study proposed in the amendment have not worked with stakeholders for consultation on either element.

I am urging you to reject HB 2548 and the -7 amendment.

Sincerely



David P Goracke, President  
Cala Farms Inc