

Submitter: Macey Wessels  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Rules  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2548  
May 29, 2025

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

I am writing to express my opposition to the -7 amendment to HB 2548. This bill could be devastating to our farmers and their ability to produce some of the highest quality crops for the world. Our farm grows grass seed, mint, hazelnuts, other specialty crops, and we bale grass straw for export. All of these commodities help grow our Oregon economy and provide jobs in rural Oregon. I significant concerns about the -7 amendment and the base bill and its impacts to our family farms throughout the state.

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, 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, and that reach and the relationships are not reflected in the proposal. Additionally, the Oregon Department of Agriculture, who producers, like me 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 I 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, creating job loss in places where jobs are needed most. Over the last five years, there has been a six percent loss of farmland in Oregon - and 65% of farms operating in Oregon saw a net cash loss in 2022.

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.

Sincerely,  
Macey Wessels