



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

My name is Brooke Hill, and I am writing on behalf of Oregon AFSCME. We are the third largest labor union in the state, representing around 40,000 workers statewide. We believe in a strong, united workforce and economic justice for all workers and their families. AFSCME stands in solidarity with Oregon farmworkers in support of HB 2548 -7, to conduct a study on farmworkers and learn more about their experiences working in Oregon. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to your committee today.

Originally, the bill concept began as a strong step forward for farmworkers and their families. The House labor committee held an extensive public hearing and work session, hearing input from farmers, farmworkers, and members of the public to ensure a balanced outcome. However, despite overwhelming public support, this bill has been altered significantly from its original induction, and will not ultimately fulfill its purported goal of giving farmworkers a voice in their working conditions. What we witnessed in the several hours of public testimony was an outpouring of desire for a farmworker standards board from the people who actually do this hard work day in and day out. People from across the industry testified to the concrete good a board like this could do for Oregon farmworkers. Common themes during testimony were fear of losing one's job due to injury or illness, lack of stability, and being forced to choose between losing a paycheck or working in extreme heat, smoke, or rain. The study is a step in the right direction, but is a far cry from what the bill looked like when negotiations began.

There are over 72,000 Oregon farmworkers, who put food on our tables and contribute over \$6.8B to our state's economy, yet they earn an average of just \$34,500 annually. Most farmworkers are immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala, and Central America, many of whom speak an Indigenous language. With continued attacks on immigrants, minority populations, and their families at the federal level, it is Oregon's responsibility to live up to our core values and protect the most vulnerable.

I would also like to emphasize the importance of policymaking from a logical and fact-based perspective. If this body feels they need more information on farmworkers' conditions in order to make better decisions to support them, then this study is absolutely necessary to ensure fair and just policy is implemented. However, it's difficult to see how much more information one could need after the consistency in testimony on working conditions from the perspective of the farmworkers themselves (as well as the data presented by PCUN and other advocates for farmworkers). I'd also like to note that the farmworker standards board as originally introduced would have also included representatives from both workers and employers, already providing a diversity of perspectives. While we are disappointed that the farmworker standards board will not be moving forward this session, we support the -7 amendment to conduct a study on the experiences of Oregon farmworkers. Thank you for your time and I urge your support of HB 2548 -7.

Sincerely,

Brooke Hill

AFSCME Political Team