

TO: House Committee on Rules

FROM: Rev. Connie Yost, President, Farm Worker Ministry Northwest

SUBJECT: Yes on HB 2548 -7

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

I am the Rev. Connie Yost, president of Farm Worker Ministry Northwest. I represent the faith community and people of conscience in Oregon, who are strongly in support of HB 2548 -7 to conduct a study on Oregon farmworkers and learn about their experiences in the workplace.

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.

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.

We at Farm Worker Ministry Northwest have been advocating for farm workers for over 40 years. Too often they are invisible and dismissed due to their race, immigration status and poverty conditions. This is a moral outrage. We need to bring farm workers out into the open, understand the reality of their lives, and do all we can to support them and their families. These are truly essential workers. It has been proven over and over that no one else will – or can – do the job of these essential workers. Come on Oregon, get the data and then, do the right thing for our farm workers.

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,

Rev. Connie Yost, President  
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