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May 29th, 2025

House Committee On Rules

**RE: SUPPORT FOR HB 2548 -7 (Oregon Farmworker Report)**

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

My name is Marisol De La Torre, and I am the government relations and legislative advocate of Oregon Just Transition Alliance (OJTA). We are a member-based alliance of over 20 urban and rural communities across the state of Oregon at the frontlines of the climate crisis and often suffer the worst impacts. Among them are farmworkers, who despite their essential contributions are excluded from basic labor protections leaving them vulnerable in ways that undermine their health, safety, and dignity.

Farmworkers already face immense risks, with heat-related deaths accounting for 20% of fatalities, making it the leading cause of death in this sector.<sup>1</sup> During the 2021 heat dome, 102 people died,<sup>2</sup> four of whom were workers exposed to extreme heat on the job.<sup>3</sup> This devastating loss led to the adoption of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) heat exposure rule in 2022, which sets critical protections for workers.<sup>4</sup> The rule applies to both indoor and outdoor workplaces, activating when the heat index reaches 80 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, and mandates provisions like shaded areas, access to drinking water, and adequate rest breaks.

While these new protections are a step in the right direction, they do not address the full scope of farmworkers' challenges. Earlier this year, farmworkers and farmworker advocates led efforts to establish a Farmworker Standards Board, a crucial step toward improving their working conditions. This bill would have set industry-wide standards for wages, scheduling, and other conditions affecting farmworkers, aiming to address historical injustices and ensure fairer treatment for farmworkers.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ucs.org/sites/default/files/2019-12/farmworkers-at-risk-report-2019-web.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.opb.org/pdf/OREGON\\_heat\\_deaths\\_revised\\_1628632311939.pdf](https://www.opb.org/pdf/OREGON_heat_deaths_revised_1628632311939.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.opb.org/article/2021/08/06/oregon-june-heat-wave-deaths-names-revealed-medical-examine/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://osha.oregon.gov/OSHAPubs/5866.pdf>

However, unfortunately, the bill's original concept did not move forward and it became clear that more information was needed for the public and lawmakers to understand the challenges faced by farmworkers.

HB 2548 -7 directly addresses this critical gap by commissioning a study on Oregon farmworkers. This study will gather insights into their workplace experiences and take a critical step in ensuring that farmworkers' voices are heard.

On behalf of OJTA, I strongly urge you to support HB 2548 -7.

Sincerely,

Marisol De La Torre  
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Oregon Just Transition Alliance  
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