



May 29, 2025

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

My name is Ira Cuello-Martinez and on behalf of PCUN, Oregon's Farmworker Union, I am providing testimony in strong support of HB 2548 with the -7 to conduct a study on Oregon farmworkers and their experiences at the workplace.

Earlier this session, we introduced the bill to establish a workforce standards board to address the challenges farmworkers face as a result of being excluded from the Fair Labor Standards Act and the National Labor Relations Act. Unfortunately, we made the hard decision to not move forward with the policy to establish a board and instead we are advocating for a farmworker study to be done.

One of the biggest learning outcomes we experienced this session is the need to educate the legislature about what farmworkers are facing. We believe that there are a lot of misconceptions about farmworkers despite several of their testimonies and stories that were shared. Not only are they having challenges at the workplace, but they are consistently being attacked by the federal administration due to their immigration status or perceived immigration status.

We are not here to punish employers, but to go after the bad actors who take advantage and exploit farmworkers. We recognize that not every employer is doing bad things, but bad things are regularly happening based on what we are hearing from our members and the broader farmworker community.

I want to be clear that the purpose of the study is to learn about farmworkers and their experiences working in agriculture. The -7 amendment directs the Center for Public Service at Portland State University to conduct a comprehensive, statewide study that includes:

- Job safety;
- Wages, both hourly and piece-rate;
- Access to benefits;
- Financial security;
- Voicing concerns at the workplace;
- Gender-specific dynamics;
- Training and education;
- Barriers to enforcement;
- Farm labor contractors;
- H2A visa program.

The study will include perspectives from workers as well as farmers and employers across different agricultural industries and regions of the state. Based on the Agricultural Census of 2022, areas with the highest concentrations of farmworkers are in the following counties:

- Clackamas County (7,490), Hood River County (5,826), Jackson County (2,7112), Marion County (10,603), Umatilla County (3,418), Washington County (6,348), Wasco County (3,171), and Yamhill County (4,498).

Many farmworkers are immigrants, people of color, or speak languages other than English. These workers are often excluded from decision-making spaces, yet they know their conditions better than anyone. Through in-person interviews and focus groups, the study creates space for these workers to directly inform lawmakers about their experiences in the workplace.

The legislature will be informed and updated on the status and findings of the study. The report findings will be presented to the appropriate legislative committees with updates scheduled for May 1st, September 1st, and the final report due on December 1st, 2026. It is critical for the legislature and agricultural stakeholders to review the report objectively.

A well-researched report will help policymakers understand where gaps exist in Oregon's labor protections and what kinds of solutions will actually work. Whether that's stronger enforcement, targeted education, or new worker protections, this study will give the legislature a roadmap for action that is grounded in Oregon's unique agricultural landscape.

We urge the committee to advance HB 2548 with the -7 amendment to ensure we all have an understanding of what farmworkers are facing in the workplace.

Thank you.

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