

Members of the Committee,

My name is Parker Sherrell, and I am a first generation farmer in Oregon. I am submitting this testimony in opposition to the amendment in HB 2548-7 requiring a report on agricultural labor standards. While I support fair workplace protections, this amendment raises significant concerns about its design, intent, and potential to harm the long-term viability of our farm and others like it.

The amendment's focus on potential shortcomings in workplace protections and enforcement appears designed to justify increased regulation rather than gather objective data. As farmers, we operate under stringent state and federal laws covering wages, benefits, health, and safety. These agencies already collect and report this information, making the proposed study redundant and an inefficient use of resources.

The study's structure lacks balance and oversight. It is assigned to Portland State University without competitive bidding or consideration of other institutions, raising questions about transparency. Furthermore, the amendment does not require equal representation from industry stakeholders, such as farmers, workforce managers, or labor law compliance experts, to ensure fairness. Without this, the study risks being shaped by a single perspective, undermining its credibility.

The amendment also fails to account for the economic and logistical realities of farming. Our work schedules are dictated by time-sensitive growing and harvest seasons, which are weather-dependent and unpredictable. A fair study must recognize these unique challenges rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach to labor standards.

Additionally, the study's reliance on interviews with farmworkers, without requiring participants to be currently employed, will produce qualitative data based on personal perceptions rather than objective facts. A robust study should include quantitative data, such as compliance rates and economic impacts, to provide a complete picture. Without this, the report risks being incomplete and biased.

As an employer, I am deeply concerned about the lack of protections for farmers participating in this study. The amendment includes employers in the report but offers no oversight or guarantee of neutrality. Given the potential for retaliation from state agencies or advocacy groups, participating feels unsafe, despite our commitment to following workplace rules and providing for our employees.

Finally, the report's timeline is problematic. Due at the end of 2026, it precedes the 2027 implementation of significant regulations, including 40-hour agricultural overtime and OR-OSHA labor housing rules requiring costly infrastructure changes. These changes will profoundly affect farmworker labor standards and our operations' financial sustainability. Any study must account for these impacts before recommending further regulations.

I urge the committee to reconsider this amendment and ensure any study is fair, transparent, and inclusive of the agricultural community's realities. Without these changes, HB 2548-7 risks

imposing unnecessary burdens on Oregon's farmers, threatening the viability of our businesses and the food security we provide.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Parker Sherrell  
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