



March 9, 2021

Attention: House Committee on Business and Labor

RE: HB 2358

We are writing on behalf of the Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (WODPA), representing approximately 285 dairy farms across the west, many of these located in Oregon. Part of our mission includes working to ensure the sustainability of organic dairies by sharing our voice on policies effecting family dairy operations.

We respectfully ask that you consider further discussion and review of economic impacts between the stakeholders impacted by HB 2358 prior to advancing a mandate. We do not support its passage without fully considering how both employees and employers actively involved in agriculture feel a bill can be modeled to meet the needs of all involved.

Agriculture is a unique business sector, unlike most others. Those involved in agriculture are subject to volatility outside of their control such as weather fluctuations, perishability of crops, and working with live animals having ever-changing needs. Dairy is specifically a volatile market with milk pricing out of producer control. While on-farm inputs increase in cost, milk prices have continued to remain stagnant or even experience dramatic price declines.

With the volatile nature of agriculture, the industry does not have control over the seasonality of work required and does not necessarily fit the mold of a typical 40-hour work week. An immediate mandate with HB 2358 has the potential to have harmful implications for employees and businesses. Passage of this bill without an open discussion from all industry stakeholders may have unintended consequences. A change such as this warrants a bringing together of both employees and employers allowing for a conversation to discuss concerns and suggestions from both sides. The goal of mandates should be for



the good of all people, trying to meet everyone's needs, and full consideration of potential harmful impacts for all involved.

Oregon has proudly and successfully worked to increase benefits for all who work in the state. However, as these costs continue to rise for employers, our agricultural products become less and less competitive in the marketplace. Though we want to ensure those employed in Oregon have the best employment opportunities, it is important to consider that Oregon products must compete with states from across the nation with lesser employer paid costs. This often leaves agricultural businesses in unsustainable financial positions, creating the potential for Oregon to either lose these businesses permanently or lose them to other states. It further leads to on-farm mechanization, less amicable employment relationships, and a loss of high wage jobs across the state. Additional mandates reduce opportunities for employers to offer benefits they may have previously offered. Many organic dairies have enjoyed the long-term, family-like relationships we have with our employees, offer continuous wage increases, greater work flexibilities, and most importantly a desire for our employees to have a thriving home and work life.

We ask that you further consider the impacts and unintended consequences associated with HB 2358 prior to passage. There is opportunity to facilitate further discussion with stakeholders, review economic impacts for all involved, and create an employment model other states can look to prior to the passage of a Bill. Immediate passage of HB 2358 can lead to drastic, unintended harm for the very people it aims to protect.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jennifer Beretta

President

Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance