

Submitter: James Abeles
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Labor and Workplace Standards
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2548

I urge you to reject HB 2548, a flawed proposal that threatens the livelihood of Oregon's family farms and ranches.

Oregon already has some of the strongest worker protections in the country. Yet, HB 2548 piles on additional, unnecessary regulations that will drive up costs, increase litigation risks, and destabilize an industry already struggling with labor shortages, rising costs, and market pressures. The most recent USDA census shows that Oregon lost 6% of its farms in just five years, with over 65% operating at a net cash loss in 2022.

Instead of supporting the farms that feed our communities and fuel our rural economies, HB 2548 would make it even harder for them to survive.

This bill strips family farms of their ability to manage their workforce, transferring key decisions on staffing, wages, and training to an unelected body. It fundamentally alters Oregon's at-will employment system, shifting the burden of proof onto employers and opening the door for costly litigation—at a time when many farms are barely staying afloat. With the average settlement of an employment claim costing around \$75,000 before even reaching court, the legal risks alone could push many small farms into financial ruin.

Farming is unpredictable. We face weather extremes, fluctuating markets, and labor shortages. HB 2548 removes the flexibility we need to adapt, making it harder to hire and retain workers while increasing the likelihood of job losses, reduced hours, or outright farm closures.

Oregon's farmers and ranchers are committed to fair labor practices, but we cannot bear more unworkable mandates that threaten our ability to compete in a global market. Please reject HB 2548 and support policies that keep family farms viable for future generations.

Thank you.