

I'm asking you to oppose HB 2548 because it threatens my ability to keep farming in Oregon. Oregon already has a high minimum wage, along with overtime rules now. I am sure you have heard this, but I will say it again. In Agriculture, we are price takers. We do not get to set the price our goods sale for. Our costs to produce keep going up, but our returns for the crop are not keeping pace. This bill will cut into already small profit margins, which will in turn lead to more unemployed essential farm workers.

This bill would give unelected officials the power to set wages and safety rules that go far beyond current protections, adding more regulatory burden to small farms like mine. Farmers are already regulated by BOLI. What is the point in having another agency in charge. Having a board set piece rate for ag is also a bad idea. Not all farms operate the same. Our farm provides housing for free. In turn we pay less per piece rate than farms that have no housing available, while making sure minimum wage and overtime laws are met. Setting a price for everyone is not a fair practice. Farmers know how devastating this regulatory model is. Oregon's state agencies have adopted very harmful regulations in the last five years with little to no accountability for their actions. This board would be no different; its members aren't even elected.

HB 2548 unfairly targets agriculture by taking away at-will employment, meaning I wouldn't be able to make necessary staffing decisions without the risk of costly lawsuits. One claim can cost tens of thousands of dollars or more. I also don't believe that farms should be forced keep employees who may not meet performance expectations or adapt to the demands of the job. All other sectors in Oregon would be at-will, but farms—whose employment needs are impacted by weather, yields, trade, market conditions, pests, diseases, etc.—would not. Not only is that unfair, but it will likely result in job loss, not job security.

This bill doesn't help workers or consumers; it just makes farming harder and more expensive. I have already had to reduce hours for workers to comply with agricultural overtime, and HB 2548 would have more severe consequences.

I urge you to vote no to protect our farms and jobs.