



**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

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To: House Committee on Labor & Workforce Standards

HB 2548 has the potential to have significant negative impacts for our local farm employers. The implications of an unelected body with unchecked authority to set work standards and wages for farmers will cripple one of our largest economic drivers in our county. Farmers generally don't get to set prices for their commodities, so there is no way to recover the increased cost passed by the new governing board. Oregon already has some of the highest labor costs and protections in the country.

Farm workers are currently protected by very strong workplace regulations such as paid sick time and minimum wage. Oregon OSHA has one of the highest worksite inspection rates and has adopted some of the most expansive workplace protections in the country. HB 2548 gives a single Board the power to set wages and safety rules that go far beyond current protections, adding more regulatory and cost burden to farms. There is no accountability for the decisions they make, even if their decisions ultimately close farms or result in layoffs.

We are strongly opposed to the proposal in HB 2548 that eliminates at-will employment for farms and ranches. HB 2548 carves out farms and puts farmers at risk for costly claims for making necessary staffing decisions. All other private sectors in Oregon enjoy at-will status, but farm, whose employment needs are impacted by weather, yields, trade and market conditions, pests and diseases, would not. This is unfair.

This bill doesn't address any issues that are not already addressed in other legislation; it just makes farming harder and more expensive. Many farms have already had to reduce worker hours, change crops, or automate to control labor costs associated with overtime; HB 2548 would have more severe consequences. I urge you to vote no on HB 2548 to protect Oregon farms and ranches and the jobs we currently provide.

Sincerely,

Wasco County Board of Commissioners

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Scott C. Hege, Commission Chair

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Philip L. Brady, Vice-Chair

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Jeff Justesen, Commissioner