

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

As a farmer, I'm deeply concerned about HB 2548 and its potential impact on my livelihood. This bill could add significant financial and regulatory pressures, making it harder to keep farming. Below, I outline why I oppose it and urge the committee to vote no.

HB 2548 establishes the Agricultural Workforce Labor Standards Board, which can set wages, safety rules, and require for-cause termination for farm workers. Given Oregon's already high labor costs—averaging \$32.07 hourly, slightly above the national \$31.48—this could push small farms to the brink. Recent years have been tough due to weather and market challenges, and I can't afford more regulations.

The bill's removal of at-will employment for farms, unlike other sectors, means I risk costly lawsuits if I need to adjust my workforce, which is critical given farming's unpredictability. Unelected bureaucrats setting these rules also raises accountability concerns, especially after harmful state regulations in the past five years.

A study funded by Oregon agricultural groups shows similar overtime laws reduced farmworkers' annual earnings despite higher hourly wages, suggesting HB 2548 could lead to job losses, not security. I might have to reduce hours, change crops, automate, or sell my farm, hurting the local economy and food supply.

I appreciate the committee's role in reviewing labor standards and hope you'll consider these impacts. Please vote no on HB 2548 to protect small farms and jobs.