

I urge you to oppose HB 2548 because it threatens the viability of small farms like mine. Oregon already has some of the highest labor costs in the nation, and after several challenging years, I cannot afford additional regulations and wage increases.

This bill would grant unelected officials the authority to set wages and safety rules that go far beyond existing protections. Farmers have seen firsthand how harmful unaccountable state agency regulations can be. Over the past five years, Oregon's agencies have implemented burdensome rules with little transparency or accountability. HB 2548 would create a similar board, whose unelected members would wield significant power over agricultural operations.

The bill also unfairly targets agriculture by eliminating at-will employment for farms, while other sectors in Oregon retain this flexibility. Farming is uniquely impacted by unpredictable factors such as weather, yields, market conditions, pests, and diseases. Removing at-will employment would make it difficult to adapt staffing to these challenges without risking costly lawsuits. A single claim could cost tens of thousands of dollars, jeopardizing the financial stability of small farms. This provision would likely lead to job losses rather than job security, as farms may be forced to reduce their workforce to mitigate risks.

Additionally, HB 2548 does not benefit workers or consumers. Instead, it increases the cost and complexity of farming. For example, complying with agricultural overtime regulations has already forced me to reduce workers' hours. HB 2548 would exacerbate these challenges, further straining small farms and threatening their survival.

Oregon's agricultural sector is vital to our economy and communities. Policies like HB 2548 risk undermining the very foundation of this industry. I respectfully ask you to vote no on HB 2548 to protect Oregon's farms, jobs, and food supply.

Sincerely,

A Concerned Oregon Farmer