

RE: HB 2548

My name is Ronald Schmidt, and I have been an employee and manager at the same farm in the nursery and farm industry for over 40 years! I strongly OPPOSE HB 2548 as this negatively affects my place of employment and all the employees that I work side by side with daily.

In Oregon we have some of the highest wages in the country. Prices for our commodities are not set by our place of business, so there is no way to recover the increased cost passed by the new governing Board if approved.

The company I work for has placed a large emphasis on employee health and safety. 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 protections in the country.

HB 2548 gives unelected bureaucrats the power to set wages and safety rules that go far beyond current protection, adding more regulatory and cost burden to farms. There is no accountability for the decision they make, even if their decisions ultimately result in layoffs or even closure of the farms.

I am also opposing this bill because it eliminates at-will employment for farms and ranches. HB 2548 carves out farms and puts us at risk for costly claims for making necessary staffing decisions. All other private sectors in Oregon enjoy at-will status, but farms – whose employment needs are impacted by weather, yields, trade and market conditions, pests and diseases – would not. This is unfair.

We have already been affected by the overtime bill that has forced us to reduce worker hours, change crops and 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. This bill does not help myself or my fellow workers or consumers; it just makes farming harder and more expensive.

Sincerely,



Ronald Schmidt

Division Manager

Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas, Inc./Fessler Farms, Inc.