

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

I'm asking you to oppose HB 2548 because it threatens my ability to keep farming. Oregon already has some of the highest labor costs in the country, and after several tough years, I can't afford more regulations and wage increases.

Furthermore, why does this feel like a sneaky piece of legislation? It has not been out in the public to be discussed. This is extremely unfair and will only force farms to lay off their employees and automate operations even further. This hurts the community along with the farm workers and their families. It is so sad that farmers are being targeted rather than supported by their local government. Farmers are responsible for bringing food to your table. Do you really want to put them out of business?

This bill would give unelected bureaucrats the power to set wages and safety rules that go far beyond current protections, adding more regulatory burden to small farms like mine. 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, 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 manage hours to comply with agricultural overtime, and HB 2548 could force me to make tough operational choices like reducing my workforce, changing crops, automating, or selling the operation.

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