

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

TO: House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards

FROM: Your Name

SUBJECT: Yes on HB 2548

Dear Chair Grayber, Vice-Chairs Elmer and Muñoz, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Meredith, I live in Portland and farm a small vineyard in Oregon City and I am writing in strong support of HB 2548 to create a Farmworker Standards Board in Oregon.

There are over 72,000 Oregon farmworkers, who put food on our tables and contribute over \$6.4B to our state's economy, yet they experience poor working conditions and earn an average of just \$34,500 annually. Most farmworkers are immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala, and Central America, many of whom speak an Indigenous language.

HB 2548 will give historically excluded workers their first voice in setting industry standards with real enforcement power and accountability. The board will ensure access to fair wages, safe conditions, and protection from retaliation. This board will also create a space where consistent conversations with equal representation from workers and employers can set policy for the agricultural industry, outside of the rushed timelines and political pressures of a legislative session.

Cities and states across the country have proven that workforce standards boards work. These boards bring workers together with industry and public representatives to set meaningful standards, with real enforcement power to ensure accountability. From New York's farm laborers to Minnesota's nursing home staff to Seattle's domestic workers, these boards give workers the voice and protections they deserve and give our communities the essential food we need.

Agricultural workers and employers know our industry best and should be empowered to make decisions about it in a balanced, facilitated space like the board,

not leaving these important decisions to legislators without experience in agriculture. Likewise, it is our responsibility in the ag industry to work together to make sure our industry is treating people with dignity, care and respect.

Farmworkers deserve fair wages and the same worker protections that all other employees are guaranteed. Ensuring that our farm workers have fair and decent jobs means that farmers like me can retain skilled workers, and ensures that small farms have adequate labor during the growing season. More importantly though, it ensures that our farm workers are treated with the dignity and respect that they deserve.

I urge you to vote YES on HB 2548 to create a Farmworker Standards Board and give farmworkers the ability to set standards for the industry.

Sincerely,

Meredith Bell
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