

**Date:** March 11, 2025

**To:** House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards

**From:** Ted Cooper (he/him), Executive Vice-President, AFT-Oregon

**Re:** Support for “Relating to unemployment insurance benefits for employees unemployed due to a labor dispute; declaring an emergency- [HB 2548](#)”

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

My name is Ted Cooper, I live in Portland, and I am writing in strong support of HB 2548 to create a Farmworker Standards Board in Oregon. Thank you for the opportunity to share testimony.

AFT-Oregon represents over 18,000 education workers across Oregon. On behalf of our members, we strongly encourage your support of HB 2548.

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

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.

When we joined with allies in 2022 to help pass HB 2002, creating overtime for agricultural workers, we knew it would be a step on a long road towards justice for some of our most vulnerable cousins, who deserve a living wage and the same working conditions, protections, and opportunities as everyone else. This bill is another step on that road. I am writing today to let you know that we remain committed to that justice, for this and future steps. We don't need to exploit workers to feed our communities.

**Signed,**

Ted Cooper (he/him)

AFT-Oregon, AFT-Oregon

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