



Chair Grayber, Vice-Chair Elmer, Vice-Chair Munoz,

My name is Hugh Ady. I'm with Statecraft, a government relations firm representing Defend Workers, a nonpartisan organization. The purpose of Defend Workers is to advocate for laws and policies that improve the standard of living for Oregon's workers. Defend Workers is opposed to House Bill 2548. One of the surest ways to increase the standard of living for Oregon's workers is to generate more opportunities for employment. Employers and employees in the United States function within a free enterprise system. That system has lifted millions of Americans out of poverty over the decades, allowing them to make a living wage, provide for their families, and own homes. Employers and workers in this system depend on each other; employers depend on workers to produce their product, and employees depend on employers for a job opportunity and a paycheck.

This legislation represents an unprecedented imposition into that employer-employee relationship, and in the realm of Oregon agriculture. It will fundamentally alter the agricultural landscape, to the degree that employers will be more hesitant to hire Oregonians who need work. This will deprive the state of needed revenue, and local economies of needed business. The ramifications of House Bill 2548 will be felt across Oregon.

In particular, the establishment of a civil action presents a grave legal risk to employers. Should a terminated employee decide to sue their former employer, even if the employer followed the "for cause" steps outlined in the bill, they could entangle their former employer in a costly legal battle. Even if an employer ultimately prevails, they will likely experience a significant financial loss due to legal fees. That employer would then be faced with "recovering their loss" by cutting costs in other areas of their business, either foregoing a wage increase for current employees, deferring needed capital expenditures that harm other businesses, and other cost saving measures.

House Bill 2548 is a clear and present danger to the stability of Oregon's agricultural economy and will needlessly harms agricultural employers AND workers.