

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

Chair Grayber and members of the Labor and Workplace Standards Committee:

My name is Jon Iverson, I am a third-generation farmer from Woodburn Oregon, and I strongly urge you to vote no on HB2548.

Oregon has the 5th highest minimum wage in the country. Oregon is one of only 7 states that requires agriculture workers to be paid overtime, and of those 7 states, Oregon is in the top 3 for tightest overtime restrictions. In 2024, the Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR), the minimum wage paid for guest workers on the H2A farm worker visa, was tied with Washington for the second highest wage rate in the country. Oregon has some of the toughest OSHA regulations in the country and recently tried to make the strictest regulations on farm worker housing, that no employee is required to use but is provided free of charge as an added benefit by some farms. The facts are, Oregon already requires some of the highest wages with the safest working conditions for farm workers in the country. There is simply no need for this board to exist, this is just another expense on an already tapped Oregon budget and that will be tasked with doing a job the legislature has already accomplished.

What has the result of some of the highest wages and tightest restrictions been? Reduced hours for workers. Farms shifting away from food crops. More farm mechanization. A shift from small and medium sized farms to larger farms. Making it harder for family farmers to survive and easier for out-of-state corporate farms to move in. These outcomes are things every sponsor of this bill would say they are trying to prevent but this bill will only accelerate.

Growing up working on our farm in high school, I moved irrigation pipes in the summers. We grew mostly green beans, sweet corn, squash and potatoes, all food crops. There were several canneries where food was either canned or packed for the freezer section of the grocery store. Today my family farms grass seed, clover seed and wheat, only which wheat is directly a food crop. Most of the canneries have disappeared. So has our workforce, as we transitioned to less labor-intensive crops to survive. We used to provide a path for the American dream, one of our employees, a migrant from Mexico, son grew up to be a very successful account that can list us as one of his many clients. We used to try to provide year-round employment, so our employees had a stable income year-round. Unfortunately, with stagnant crop prices and increased costs, we can no longer provide the number of jobs or the hours we used too. These were difficult changes that not only affect

employees but employers' mental health and well-being as well.

My biggest fear is the direction this state and the country is headed when it comes to growing our own food. The United States has always had a trade surplus when it came to agricultural products, however in 2019 that flipped, and since then the U.S has been a net importer of agricultural products, with a staggering deficit of \$21 billion in 2023, only to be surpassed by 2024 which was projected at \$39 billion*. My fear is that the United States will become reliant on other countries to feed us. This is an issue of national security when another country has the ability to cut off our food supply. It was only 5 years ago when we saw how fragile our supply chain was, imagine if it was food you couldn't get instead of toilet paper. This bill will accelerate Oregon along this dangerous path, while adversely affecting the farm workers it promises to protect.

Thank you for reading my testimony, I can't urge you enough, please vote no on HB 2548.

*<https://prosperousamerica.org/u-s-faces-record-agricultural-imports-worst-trade-deficit-in-history/#:~:text=U.S.%20Now%20a%20Net%20Agricultural%20Importer&text=Howe%20ver%20by%202019%20the%20U.S.,the%20worst%20in%20our%20history>