

To whom it may concern,

My name is David Brewer. I am a fifth-generation wheat farmer in Wasco County. With my wife Margaret, we produce wheat, canola, peas, barley, cattle and grass finished beef in a no-till cropping system. I am writing to testify in opposition to HB 2548.

House Bill 2548 is another attempt by the state to tell individual farmers how to operate our businesses. As a conscientious business owner that is very dependent upon quality employees, I find the idea that the state or worse, an unelected bureaucracy, needs to be further involved in my business and the relationship I have with my employees deeply offensive. HB 2548 is an attempt to solve a problem that does not exist.

One of the biggest challenges we face as business owners is finding, training and retaining quality employees in our rural communities. Therefore, we treat our employees with respect and care, truly like family members. Currently we are adjusting to the Ag overtime law. For the first time we are having to limit the hours that our ambitious employees choose to work during our busy seasons. Bills such as HB 2548 will have similar negative consequences for our business and employees. Low wheat prices and high input costs the past couple of years have made for very tough farm economics. In fact, we had to reduce our staff by one employee this past spring due to low profitability. As business owners, we need the flexibility to operate our businesses as we see fit and to respond to market conditions. Nobody in Salem can do that for us.

As a below average sized dryland wheat farm we have chosen to remain competitive by running older equipment and adding a direct market grass finished beef enterprise to our business. Both require us to operate with more employees than other larger farms in our area. To keep these employees we pay them well and those wages stay in our community.

If the State of Oregon has the goals of limiting rural employment and the ability of small farms to compete with large farms, then HB 2548 is a great idea. I have been under the impression that protecting family farms, adding value to our farm produce and retaining quality jobs in our small communities are all in keeping with the goals of Oregon. HB 2548

would undermine our ability to continue to operate with employees and direct market the production from our small family farm.

I urge you to vote no on HB 2548. Thank you for considering my testimony.

David Brewer

Emerson Dell Farm