

Submitter: Tom Kraemer

On behalf of Kraemer Farms, LLC

Committee: House Committee On Labor and Workplace Standards

Re: HB2548 Opposition

Members of the Committee:

My name is Tom Kraemer. My family farm is a diversified farm operation founded in 1964. We currently produce Christmas trees, grass seed, hazelnuts, sugar beets, vegetables, wine grapes, and wheat. In the past this list of crops was more diverse but as labor costs increased, we were not able to compete with the lower cost of production in neighboring states. Almost all of our current employees have worked for us for 20 to 25 years.

I am asking you to oppose HB 2548. Passing this bill will threaten our ability to have the next generation take over the family business. Our state already has very strong workplace regulations such as paid sick time and annual minimum wage increases that are tied to inflation. For the most part farmers do not set the prices we receive for our production. As a result, we would not be able to recover the increases passed by this board. Adding more cost and regulatory burden via this unelected board will cause agricultural operations like ours to go out of business.

Many farms in Oregon, including ours, have had to reduce worker hours, change and eliminate crops, and automate our operations to control labor costs associated with overtime. This bill would only make it harder to continue to employ the same number of people as we are now.

HB 2548:

- Gives unelected officials the power to set wages and safety rules that go far beyond current protections, without any guardrails that consider economic burdens placed on farms, or the impact the standards would have on farms or ag employees.
- Unfairly takes away at-will employment, which no other sector would be forced to do.
- Shifts the burden of proof, while increasing costs that will not benefit the workers or consumers of agricultural goods.
- Takes away the ability of employees to work directly with employers to negotiate wages, hours, and other benefits.

Agriculture is not a one size that fits all industry. Unlike other sectors, farming is dictated by seasons, weather, and unpredictable market conditions. The ability to make real-time decisions about labor and operations is critical to the survival of family farms. By removing that flexibility, HB 2548 would push many small and mid-sized farms out of business. This would accelerate the consolidation of farmland into large corporations, something I don't want to see happen in Oregon.

I urge you to oppose HB 2548 and stand with family farmers who work tirelessly to feed our communities. Our voice matters, and we need policies that support, not dismantle local agriculture.

Sincerely,

Tom Kraemer

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Kraemer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "T" and "K".

Kraemer Farms, LLC