

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

My name is Alexis Lisandro Guizar-Diaz, and I am a fourth-year doctoral student in environmental sociology at Portland State University. I am a first-generation Oregonian and the proud son of immigrant farmworkers from Michoacán and Nayarit, México. I submit this testimony in strong support of HB 2548, a bill that represents a crucial step toward justice and fairness in Oregon's rural and agrarian communities.

I was born and raised in a small town in eastern Washington with a population of about 500 people. Like many in my community, I grew up as a farmworker alongside my parents, experiencing firsthand the realities of an industry that is both essential and deeply inequitable. These experiences were not just something I witnessed—they shaped me. Now, as a scholar, I have the privilege of studying these issues in an academic setting, connecting my lived experiences in the fields to the broader economic and political forces shaping agriculture today.

We cannot ignore the reality that our rural communities are deteriorating—socially, economically, and environmentally, you name it. Corporate dominance, financialization, and climate change are crushing farms and communities alike. Many are being pushed out. Many families and livelihoods are threatened. Debt is rising. Small towns are hollowing out.

Farmworkers feel these changes too—but unlike others, we are expected to endure them in silence.

Let me be clear: we are not your enemy. Farmworkers are not the ones making this industry unsustainable. When you have a bad day, we live a nightmare—one shaped by poverty wages, unsafe conditions, and a system designed to silence and repress us.

There is no question that agriculture is in crisis, but the solution cannot be to continue down the same path of exploitation and presumed exceptionalism that has defined this industry for generations.

Providing food and fiber is essential, just like construction, manufacturing, and other industries. So, what makes agriculture so special that its workers are denied similar protections and rights?

Many workers get overtime, safety protections, and job security—why not farmworkers?

Other workers are protected against wrongful termination—why not farmworkers?

Most other essential workers receive fair wages, benefits, and a voice in their workplace—why not farmworkers?

This notion of exceptionalism has allowed the agricultural industry to sidestep responsibility for far too long. It has shielded those in power from doing what is right while maintaining a status quo where farmworkers are seen as disposable rather than equal members of our communities.

HB 2548 offers a path forward—one that strengthens our communities by ensuring that labor in this industry is treated fairly and with dignity.

Who is the Real Enemy? The industry is being reshaped—not by farmworkers or some "big scary union," we don't have that right, but by corporate industrial agribusiness, Wall Street speculation, and unchecked financialization.

The fact that agribusiness lobbies are so vehemently opposed to a workforce standards board signals one thing that farmworkers have always known: Many farmers and landowners do not see us as equals, as fellow human beings deserving of dignity and respect.

They fear that if we have a voice, if we have protections, their control over our labor will weaken. This is a continuation of a long history of labor exploitation, from chattel slavery to sharecropping to today's neo-colonial farm labor system.

But let me remind you: many farmworkers were farmers in their homelands, too, before imperialist powers and transnational economic systems and agreements made that unsustainable.

To the farmers who oppose this bill, I ask you: Who's really your enemy?

It is not your workers. It is not your neighbors; it's not the people whose hands have sustained this industry generation after generation.

Our enemy sits in a corporate boardroom, in a faraway place, wearing a suit and tie. It is the corporate industrial food regime, the private tyrannies of agribusiness and financial institutions that have hijacked this industry.

They have never picked a piece of fruit.

They have never dug a ditch.

They have never felt the weight of soil in their hands.

Yet they dictate our futures!

They watch their stock portfolios rise, while we watch our debts grow. They impose their high-input, high-cost agricultural models that leave our communities trapped in cycles of dependence on credit systems, fossil fuels, and chemical inputs.

This isn't just killing farmworkers—it is killing rural communities, too.

- Farmer suicides are at an all-time high.
- Debt burdens are skyrocketing.
- Our small towns are being swallowed up by agribusiness monopolies.

HB 2548 is not about making enemies. It is about ensuring that we—the people who make agriculture possible—are given a fair say in shaping our futures.

This is a step toward planting the seeds of change and restoring our communities, dignity, and livelihoods. The most marginalized among us should not be the ones paying the price for a broken system while the real power brokers sit untouched. We might say the system is broken for us, but it works exactly how they want it to.

It is time to stop fighting each other and start fighting for a future where we are respected, protected, and heard.

For decades, farmworkers have been overlooked, underpaid, and silenced, while our families and communities have paid a heavy price—often with high interest.

Farmworkers are part of these communities. We live here, we pray here, we raise our families here, and we contribute to Oregon’s economy. Yet, we have been denied the dignity of having a voice in our workplaces.

This bill is not just about setting standards—it is about bringing fairness to an industry that has long depended on the silence and vulnerability of its workforce.

This is about more than labor policy—it is about ensuring that Oregon’s agricultural industry moves toward a just and resilient future for generations.

We are Oregonians, whether we were born here or elsewhere. It should not matter where we came from or whether we have the “right” documentation.

We are human beings. We are workers. We deserve dignity and respect.

Much like many of your own ancestors, we came to this land in search of a better life. We know that history is complicated—this land was taken through the genocide of Indigenous people. We cannot change the past, but we can choose to build a better future.

HB 2548 is a step toward that future.

I urge you to support HB 2548 and take a stand for justice, dignity, and the future of Oregon’s agricultural communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alexis L. Guizar-Diaz". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Alexis Lisandro Guizar-Diaz, MS