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## State Senator Kayse Jama

Senate District 24 (D-East Portland, Damascus, Boring)

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Chair Grayber, Vice-Chairs Elmer and Muñoz, and Members of the House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards,

I write today in support of HB 2548 with the -2 amendment, which would establish a workplace standards board for Oregon’s agricultural industry. This legislation is vital to preserving the health and stability of our agricultural workforce and giving farmworkers a long-overdue voice in the standards that govern their working conditions.

Farmworkers are the backbone of our state’s food system and a critical sector of our economy. In 2022, Oregon exported approximately \$2.4 billion in agricultural products to foreign markets, making it the 24th largest agricultural exporting state in the U.S.<sup>1</sup> Commodities like wheat, beef, fruits, nuts, and specialty seeds find strong demand overseas. This reliance on export markets means that global trade policy, international logistics, and foreign demand directly impact Oregon’s farm sector health. As the industry consolidates and Oregon farms face an uncertain global landscape, now is the time for an industry standards board, led by industry experts.

Oregon’s agriculture carries strategic importance for the state’s identity and future. The industry’s ability to continually adapt (e.g. introducing new high-value crops like hemp or hops varieties, adopting technology for precision farming, etc.) has kept it competitive. We lead the nation in certain sustainable practices and niche markets (such as organic farming and direct-to-consumer sales; about 13% of Oregon farms sell directly to consumers, well above the U.S. average).<sup>2</sup> None of this would be possible without farmworkers, who see almost none of the wealth that this industry generates—making an average of less than \$35,000 a year.<sup>3</sup> They also face dangerous working conditions and high instances of wage violations. To ensure the long-term success of our agricultural sector, we must better support our agricultural workforce.

HB 2548 does exactly that. It has broad support from more than a dozen legislators, groups like the Fair Shot Oregon Coalition, the BIPOC Caucus, and many other groups. I’m proud to support this bill and the workers behind it.

I strongly urge your support for HB 2548 with the -2 Amendment.

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<sup>1</sup> [Oregon Exports and Foreign Investment](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Census of Agriculture - OR State Profile](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Oregon - May 2023 OEWS State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates](#)