

Submitter: Denice Searcy
On Behalf Of: All Farmers of Oregon
Committee: House Committee On Labor and Workplace Standards
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2548

NO on HB 2548

This bill is yet another attack on the farmers of Oregon. I plan on buying a farm here in Oregon to work part of it with my family, and lease out the remaining farmlands. This is my dream for me and the generations that are to come. I don't want to be stymied before I even get started.

Oregon's agricultural industry is already grappling with the aftermath of the recent agricultural overtime law, HB 4002 (2022). Now, HB 2548 proposes a sweeping one-size-fits-all mandate that could force many family farms and ranches out of business.

As I understand it, Oregon already boasts some of the strongest labor laws in the nation, which apply equally to farmworkers. The facts do not support the idea that farm workers need additional protections through HB 2548. Oregon's workplace protections are already so expansive and costly that many small farms can no longer afford to operate.

Unions and trial attorneys introduced HB 2548, which creates a workforce standards board for agriculture. Special interests do not want to spend the time money to unionize farm by farm, so they're proposing a "workforce standards board" to bargain the workforce all at once.

HB2548 includes two provisions that effectively "unionize" farm work at the industry level:

1. Creates an unelected, governing body with the authority to set increased regulations for organ farms, at least every two years.
2. Eliminates at-will employment for agriculture and dictates how farm employers can terminate workers, creating significant challenges and litigation risk for agricultural employers, and added hardship for family farms.

This legislation will result in the shutdown of multigenerational operations and loss of farm jobs.