

Submitter: Michelle Week
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Labor and Workplace Standards
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2548

TO: House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards
FROM: Your name
SUBJECT: Yes on HB 2548 -2

Dear Chair Grayber, Vice-Chairs Elmer and Muñoz, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Michelle Week, I live in Troutdale and I am writing in strong support of HB 2548 -2 to create a Farmworker Standards Board in Oregon.

There are over 72,000 Oregon farmworkers, who put food on our tables and contribute over \$6.8B to our state's economy, yet they experience poor working conditions and earn an average of just \$34,500 annually. Most farmworkers are immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala, and Central America, many of whom speak an Indigenous language.

HB 2548 -2 will give historically excluded workers their first voice in setting industry standards with real enforcement power and accountability. The board will ensure access to fair wages, safe conditions, and protection from retaliation

Cities and states across the country have proven that workforce standards boards work. These boards bring workers together with industry and public representatives to set meaningful standards, with real enforcement power to ensure accountability. From New York's farm laborers to Minnesota's nursing home staff to Seattle's domestic workers, these boards give workers the voice and protections they deserve and give our communities the essential food we need.

Farm workers are the only classification of employee often excluded and held back from general labor laws standards and requirements. After a long history of abuse and exploitation starting at the founding of this country off the backs of slave labor (chattel, indentured, child) such systemic disregard for the American agricultural worker remains obviously visible in our policy and legal frameworks to this very day. As a farmer laborer myself and now an employer it behooves me to speak up in support of my colleagues. Creating a committee composed of all stake holders to review and uplift farm labor is the least our State can do to remedy the lack of humanity found within our labor regulations. All members of our communities deserve to prosper without having to deprive one another, without needing to exploit each other, without putting profit above life.

I urge you to vote YES on HB 2548 -2 to create a Farmworker Standards Board and give farmworkers the ability to set standards for the industry.

Sincerely,
Michelle Week