

My name is Michelle Armstrong-Zielinski I am representing the Associated Oregon Hazelnut Industry. I will start today by giving you some numbers

- The Farmgate value of Oregon Hazelnuts is \$120million/year over the 5 year average
- The average cost to produce 1lb of nuts is \$0.50-\$0.83/lb for younger in mature orchards it takes 4-5 year to get a harvestable crop and 10 year plus for a tree to mature meaning the cost is much higher in those years.
 - Average price to the grower does not leave a large margin in
 - 2022 \$0.62/lb
 - 2023 \$0.95/lb
 - 2024 \$1.12/lb
- Owners often make below minimum wage where I have been told they made a \$1/hour or no money at all and get the opportunity to put their savings back into the farm to keep it running.
- Regulations have already forced farmers to cut back on hand labor, moving more towards mechanical options instead.
 - Farmers used to pay employees in slow times, they can no longer afford to do this and thus are forced to lay many people off and rely more on labor contractors for peak times.
- This bill singles out Agriculture giving them different requirements than the rest of Oregon employers.
- Oregon has the highest minimum wage in the country, many farmers pay employees above this level, skilled workers are valuable to each grower as there are not enough of them to go around.
- With 200 plus different crops grown in Oregon there is no way to standardized training across all agriculture due to multiple reasons.
 - 1. Equipment is different for each farm and requires training to operate at the farm level.
 - 2. Buyers require farmers to harvest same crops differently in many crops
 - 3. Farming is an art and like artists, each farmer has their way of doing things
 - 4. The environmental conditions change and thus we must adapt to it, and this can change how things are done at those times
 - 5. Different varieties have different requirements

Gowers cannot afford more regulations that take away their ability to operate independently and reward their employees for jobs well done. I urge you to oppose HB2548!