

Both of my grandparents operate small family farms in Ione and Forest Grove, Oregon. I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Bill 2548, which seeks to establish the Agricultural Workforce Labor Standards Board and impose new regulations on agricultural employers, including a prohibition on terminating workers without cause. While I appreciate the intent to support agricultural workers, this bill places an undue burden on small farmers, threatening their ability to survive in an already challenging industry.

Running a small farm is not like managing a large corporation. Farming family's works tirelessly to grow crops and livestock, often with razor-thin profit margins. Small farms rely on flexibility to adapt to unpredictable factors—weather, market prices, and labor needs that shift with the seasons. HB 2548's requirement to justify every termination decision undermines that flexibility. If a small farm hires a seasonal worker who isn't performing—say, someone who consistently mishandles equipment or fails to show up on time, they would be forced to keep them on or face a lengthy process to prove "cause." This isn't just impractical; it's a direct threat to the farm's productivity and financial stability.

The creation of yet another bureaucratic board to dictate labor standards adds more red tape. Small farmers don't have HR departments or legal teams to navigate these rules. The biennial reviews and uniform training mandates sound reasonable in theory, but in practice, they mean more costs—time, money, and resources small farms simply don't have. Larger agribusinesses might absorb these burdens, but for small operations, it could be the difference between staying afloat or shutting down.

We care deeply about farm workers. They're part of our community, and we treat them fairly. But this bill assumes employers are the problem, piling on regulations without considering how they'll play out in the real world. Oregon's small farms are already struggling with rising input costs, labor shortages, and competition from industrial producers. HB 2548 could be the tipping point that forces family farms out of business, reducing local food production and jobs—not just for owners, but for the very workers this bill aims to protect.

I urge you to vote no on HB 2548. Instead, let's work on

solutions that support both workers and small farmers—flexible policies that recognize the unique challenges of agriculture without strangling those of us who feed the state. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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