

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

House Bill 2548 fails to recognize the vast diversity of agriculture in Oregon. Unlike California's Fast Food Council where it is generally accepted that the work at one fast food restaurant is relatively similar in nature to the work at another fast food restaurant, work on a cattle ranch is significantly different from work on an apple orchard. This is the beauty of Oregon's agricultural industry. Agriculture is varied and nuanced and its sectors should not be conflated under one rule, regulation, or board. The conditions under which we farm are vastly different but equally challenging. For our highly specialized and diverse industry to be the test case for a workforce board tasked with standardizing regulations in a one size fits all manner is without comprehension or appreciation for the work taking place on Oregon farms today.

The provision in this bill to end at-will employment in the state of Oregon *only* for the agricultural industry is troubling, damaging, and like a kill shot to an industry already struggling. Farming is not like other industries in Oregon; the weather can change a farmer's plan in an instant. At 2:30am on Friday, June 12, 2020 a hail storm destroyed our entire pear crop on my orchard just two months before we anticipated harvest would begin. It was a complete loss. This exemplifies why farming requires the ability to be flexible with work schedules, hours, and employment agreements. On top of the anxiety over whether or not we can survive this disaster, this bill would require a farmer to prove to an oversight board or legal counsel that work could not be done, and they would decide if that proof is sufficient. The only thing that would have made my loss in 2020 a larger financial disaster than it was would have been labor contracts forcing me to pay wages for a crop that was now destroyed and worthless. At-will employment, where employees and employers both have the option to end an employment relationship, is foundational to our economy in general, but it is paramount in agriculture. As with every other industry in Oregon, there are protections from wrongful termination for protected reasons, and agencies already tasked with ensuring farmers provide safe working conditions and housing for employees. For the sponsors of this bill to single out agriculture in this way sends the a strong message: we don't value farms.

Though we sometimes disagree with the mandates passed by this legislature, I respect the right of lawmakers to pass and amend state laws. Conversely, there is increasing concern with the amount of rule making coming from state

agencies in recent years, specifically regarding agriculture. Empowering unelected bureaucrats to dictate wage and benefit rules through this workforce board would be a step backward, not forward. As the peoples' representatives, I urge you to maintain oversight regarding the critical laws and regulations that impact the agricultural industry. This power should not be given to an advisory or regulatory board.

Today I respectfully remind the committee that the farmers of Oregon are watching. What message will you send to Oregon agriculture with your vote? We hope that you will show us that you value labor reliant crops in Oregon. We hope that you will show us you want family farms to continue in the state of Oregon by opposing House Bill 2548.

Thank you for your time.