



Date: March 13, 2025

To: House Committee on Labor and Workforce Standards

RE: Please oppose HB 2548 -2 amendment

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

I'm Elin Miller, and I'm the founding president of the Oregon Wine Council that represents over 50 percent of the Oregon wine grapes, grown, produced and sold, and, also proud to say, I'm one of those 97 percent family farmers in our state.

Our Oregon wine industry is economically in the worst situation it's been in for over 25 years. We're doing a lot better than our friends to the north and to the south, however, when you talk about a 10 percent decrease in prices from 2023 to 2024 for wine, that's only the tip of the iceberg. We went through the challenges of COVID closing tasting rooms, which have yet to fully recover, proceeded and followed by wildfires, which over the last several years, left grapes hanging to rot on the vine in various areas in our beautiful state. In addition to all this, our markets have been negatively impacted by demographics domestically and globally, including exceedingly low priced, subsidized bulk wine entering from foreign markets in unprecedented amounts. One of our members has even found it more economical to use rose instead of water for dust suppression in their vineyards, while of course, needing regulatory approval to do so.

Our wine industry is facing a very difficult situation today. We estimate more than 20 percent of the grapes in Oregon are not under contract with wineries, opposed to nearly all having contracts with wineries in previous years. What does that mean? We won't be harvesting this year, further driving prices down, while, as a farmer and vineyard owner, my regulatory input and labor costs have skyrocketed.

The last thing we need is a redundant regulatory body and almost certain increase in labor costs if this board is formed. Our workers are the most important and valuable part of our operation. We work side by side, whether it be pruning or harvest, rain or shine. However, as a former regional administrator of EPA, I see creating this duplicate bureaucracy to impose new standards on a now exceedingly complex and difficult human resource environment that we have today as unnecessary and counterproductive. It is unfairly singling out agriculture, our farms and our workers. Instead, let's rely on our current regulatory agencies: BOLI, OSHA and others, which have strict mandates to ensure safe and productive workplaces for all Oregonians. Agriculture is not exempt from worker protection today in Oregon, and we have to abide by those rules, as do other industries.

Please consider voting no on HB 2548 and the -2 amendment. They are not at all helpful or advisory but unduly punitive to Oregon's farmers and vineyards and our valued workers and employees. Please don't single out agriculture.

Sincerely,

Elin Miller
Board Member
Oregon Wine Council