

My name is Flor Castro, I work at a small family farm. I'm asking you to oppose HB 2548 because it threatens my employer's ability to keep farming. Oregon already has some of the highest labor costs in the country, and after several tough years, our farm can't afford more regulations and wage increases.

This bill would give unelected officials the power to set wages and safety rules that go far beyond current protections, adding more regulatory burden to small farms like ours. Farmers know how devastating this regulatory model is. Oregon's state agencies have adopted very harmful regulations in the last five years with little to no accountability for their actions. This board would be no different; its members aren't even elected.

HB 2548 unfairly targets agriculture by taking away at-will employment, meaning we wouldn't be able to make necessary staffing decisions without the risk of costly lawsuits. One claim can cost tens of thousands of dollars or more. I also don't believe that farms should be forced to keep employees who may not meet performance expectations or adapt to the demands of the job. All other sectors in Oregon would be at-will, but farms—whose employment needs are impacted by weather, yields, trade, market conditions, pests, diseases, etc.—would not. Not only is that unfair, but it will likely result in job loss, not job security.

This bill doesn't help workers or consumers; it just makes farming harder and more expensive. We have already had to reduce hours for workers to comply with agricultural overtime, and HB 2548 would have more severe consequences.

I urge you to vote no to protect our farms and jobs.