

TO: House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards

FROM: Jill Hambleton-O'Donnell

SUBJECT: Yes on HB 2548

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

My name is Jill Hambleton-O'Donnell, I live in Yamhill County, Oregon and I am writing in strong support of HB 2548 to create a Farmworker Standards Board in Oregon.

There are over 72,000 Oregon farmworkers along with their employers, who put food on our tables and contribute over \$6.4B to our state's economy.

HB 2548 will give employees along with their employers, a voice in setting industry standards with real enforcement power and accountability. The board will ensure access to fair wages, safe conditions, and protection from retaliation as well as create an 'even playing field' for employers. This board will also create a space where consistent conversations with equal representation from workers and employers can set policy for the agricultural industry, outside of the rushed timelines and political pressures of a legislative session.

Being an agricultural employer myself, it is important to continue to be able to attract a highly motivated and educated workforce. A workforce standards board will help create a work environment in Oregon that is seen as one where the concerns of workers as well as employers are considered when creating workplace standards and therefore a more attractive environment all around.

Also, as an employer, it is important to have employees and employee groups understand the difficulties and concerns facing not only workers, but agricultural businesses as well. A workforce standards board would create an environment for the exchange of ideas, concerns, problems, and solutions directly between employers and employees and across crop specialties to allow best practices to become standards for the industry.

Together, employers and employees through a Farmworker Standards Board would be able to speak, with one united voice, to create and implement policy and rules that are beneficial for all and that would make the Oregon agriculture industry strong and resilient.

The Oregon agriculture industry is filled with some of the hardest working employees and employers in all of Oregon's industry and these workers, whether employees or employers deserve to be treated with dignity, care, and respect. A Farmworker Standards Board will facilitate that, especially with regard to formation of policy and rules as it will bring together both employers and employees of agriculture to shape standards for the industry.

Cities and states across the country have proven that workforce standards boards work. These boards bring workers together with industry and public representatives to set meaningful standards, with real enforcement power to ensure accountability. From New York's farm laborers to Minnesota's nursing home staff to Seattle's domestic workers, these boards give workers the voice and protections they deserve and give our communities the essential food we need.

I urge you to vote YES on HB 2548 to create a Farmworker Standards Board and give farmworkers and their employers the ability to set standards for the industry together.

Sincerely,

Jill Hambleton-O'Donnell