

Submitter: Luke VanderZanden
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Labor and Workplace Standards
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2548

My name is Luke VanderZanden and I am a 4th generation farmer in North Hillsboro where we grow grass seed, wheat and clover. Furthermore, we have a bedding plant nursery as well as a grass seed cleaner. Year round the farm employs 7 people, including my wife and myself. Throughout the spring and summer we see a rotation of about 4 additional individuals during nursery season or harvest in the fields. All of whom return to us year after year because of the environment we strive to provide.

Similar to many other farmers in Oregon we consider ourselves family with those who work with us, as do they us. Since high school I have worked with many amazing people and have learned so much from them all; from my grandpa's cousin, a retired truck driver, to someone who saw civil war in his country as a child. Not only has work gotten done but stories have been shared and lessons have been learned.

Our farm has seen moments of triumph and moments of just scrapping by. We have celebrated the good with all and without the support of the employees my family's farm would have faltered.

Currently the ag industry is struggling. Inputs are high and our commodities are being sold for pennies on the dollar. Just last week my mom, who owns the business, and I talked about how to weather this storm and what our priorities are. The answer was simple because each time a farm faces this uncertainty the priorities remain the same. Protect our people and don't cut corners. A person does this and they know they did things the right way.

I see the intention behind HB 2548 but it's rushed and counterproductive. When I first read through the bill my only thought was how is this farm going to make it through this. My concern is that if this were to go through there would be more harm than good accomplished. People will lose their jobs and family legacies will come to an end. What will this bill do for farmworkers as we look for other work in our areas of expertise?

Lastly, a few years ago a woman working in my family's nursery told my Mom about a previous place of employment that required workers only use the restroom when on break or with permission. That is wrong, there are bad players out there in this industry and all other industries. Let's use our current guidelines and authorities to continue to educate employer and employe. This legislation will hurt the people who are doing this honestly, while the people who are dishonest will take advantage.

Let's work on this as a community to continue to better ourselves. Instead of putting a barrier between people who care so much about one another.

Thank you for your time

Luke VanderZanden
Farm worker