

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

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Max Light-Pacheco, and I am a proud resident of Portland, Oregon. I am here today to voice my strong support for HB 2548 because I believe that protecting workers' rights is essential to ensuring fairness, equity, and justice in our state.

As a member of the Latino community, I have seen firsthand how farmworkers—many of whom are immigrants—work tirelessly to put food on our tables, yet are often denied basic labor protections. These hardworking individuals contribute over \$6.4 billion to Oregon's economy, but they continue to face harsh working conditions and poverty wages. It is unacceptable that in 2024, we still allow an entire workforce to be treated as second-class citizens simply because of outdated exclusions from labor laws.

Farmworkers, like all workers, deserve a voice in the policies that shape their jobs and livelihoods. HB 2548 would give them that voice by establishing a Workforce Standards Board—ensuring that farmworkers, employers, and public representatives come together to create enforceable workplace protections. This is not only a step toward economic justice, but it also aligns with Oregon's commitment to environmental justice.

Many farmworkers face dangerous working conditions, from extreme heat and pesticide exposure to physically demanding labor. These conditions are worsened by climate change, disproportionately impacting the same communities that are already vulnerable. Without strong workplace protections, these workers are left at the mercy of industry practices that prioritize profit over people. HB 2548 would help change that by establishing stronger enforcement measures, anti-retaliation protections, and a just cause standard to prevent unjust firings.

Other states have already proven that standards boards are effective. Farmworkers in New York, nursing home staff in Minnesota, domestic workers in Seattle, and fast food workers in California have all benefited from these policies. Oregon must not fall behind. We have the opportunity to lead by ensuring that our agricultural workforce has the rights and protections they deserve.

Supporting HB 2548 is not just about labor rights—it's about standing up for immigrant communities, advancing environmental justice, and strengthening

Oregon's economy. I urge you to pass this bill and give farmworkers the dignity, protection, and fair treatment they have been denied for far too long.

Thank you for your time and consideration.