



March 14, 2025

Representative Dacia Grayber, Chair
House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards
Oregon State Legislature
Oregon State Capitol 900 Court St. NE
Salem OR, 97301

Breedden Family Farms
Derry D. Breedden, Owner & Operator

RE: Written Testimony Opposing HB 2548:

Dear Chair Grayber, Vice-Chair Elmer, Vice-Chair Muñoz, and Members of the House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards,

I'm the Owner and Operator of Breedden Family Farms. We're located in Lebanon, OR and service the Mid-Willamette Valley as well as the rest of the country. As a small agricultural business owner, I have the privilege and responsibility of providing a paycheck to my employees, providing quality nursery stock to my customers, and keeping a family home on our small farm. I have some severe concerns about HB 2548.

We're not a longstanding operation; my wife and I decided to pursue our entrepreneurial passion and purchase a nursery. Navigating the current legal and regulatory environment for agricultural producers has been challenging. Under HB 2548, this landscape will dramatically change leading to higher operational costs which threaten both our razor-thin profit margins and the livelihoods of our employees. We happily comply with all current employee protection statutes because we desire to have a business that grows both plants and community.

By changing the employee status from "at-will" to "for cause" will severely impact the managerial operations because our limited time and resources must be diverted for HR and practically necessitates us hiring an HR firm to handle the progressive discipline, performance improvement plans, and potential termination of an employee. The liability shift onto the employer to prove reasonable termination entirely changes the relationship between myself and our employees because every infraction would need to be documented for legal purposes when a simple constructive conversation and handshake agreement would fix the problem.

In the agricultural industry, we cannot simply raise the price of products, because we're commodity-based, to cover the cost of implementing this bill. Our pricing is dictated by supply, demand, weather, market conditions, pests, diseases, trade, and many other variables outside our control. Furthermore, nurseries often grow on contract and have already agreed upon a sale price for a certain number of years freezing any price increase. I'm worried that this will eventually lead to reduced employment opportunities and pave the road for large out-of-state corporate agricultural businesses to pressure our small family farms into selling.

Please let BOLI continue to operate and handle these issues under the directives of the legislature, not by creating a new bureaucratic workplace standards board which will circumvent the public input process and direct agency action.

Sincerely,

Derry Breeden

Derry D. Breeden, Owner
Breeden Family Farms