

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

HB 2548 Testimony
3/14/2025

House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards,
I am writing in opposition of HB 2548.

As the President/CEO of a large, grower owned cooperative in Hood River, I feel it is important that I express my concerns over proposed House Bill 2548. Diamond Fruit Growers represents 60 small family farms the Hood River Valley. There is great concern in the local agricultural community that the establishment of the Agricultural Workforce Labor Standards Board that is proposed in HB 2548 will have a negative impact on local growers. Agricultural producers are some of the most regulated employers in the State. Adding another layer of regulation and oversight seems very unfair and excessive. The agricultural industry in the Hood River Valley is a critical component of the local economy and any disruption of this industry will have a ripple effect through the entire area. Many businesses, from farm supply stores to grocery stores, depend on a vibrant, successful agricultural community. I implore that you carefully consider the impact HB2548 will have on local agricultural producers and on the local economy. Many livelihoods depend on your decision.

The Hood River Valley is a major producer of pears, cherries, apples, and blueberries. All of these crops require significant labor to prune, thin, and harvest. Technology to accomplish these tasks simply does not exist at this time. As a result, hundreds of permanent, seasonal, and H2A employees perform these tasks every year. Their knowledge and skill are critical to the successful management of the valley's crops, and the successful marketing Hood River's agricultural commodities. Growers understand and appreciate the value that this labor force provides for their operations.

The establishment of an appointed committee to oversee the management of employees in this one industry seems unfair. No other industry is included in the proposal. Fortunately, most agricultural producers in our area are still small, family farms, many of which have been in the family for generations. These producers understand the importance of properly caring for the land and people that help them produce the highest quality fruit in the world. Many of the workers employed by local producers have been a part of the farm for many years. Many local growers supply housing for their employees at little or no cost. Entire families reside on the farm, and growers take great pride in watching these families grow and thrive in our community. Agriculture is a tough business. It takes a lot of hard work to successfully produce high quality crops. Margins are thin, and growers have very little control the price they are paid for their products. This means that careful management of every aspect of

the operation is necessary to produce the revenue needed to make the operation successful. Success in agriculture is often defined as the ability to continue their operation next year. The effective management of employees is critical in insuring that the operation is successful. If small farms aren't successful, the result can be the loss of the land for production, or the consolidation of the family farm into large, corporate farms that are motivated by profit and not necessarily a love of the land and workers. An appointed committee of outside "experts" cannot possibly understand all the details that go into agricultural operations that are scattered all over the State. One rule fit's all thinking will hurt everyone involved.

In closing, I welcome the chance to express my concerns, and the concerns that our local producers have with HB 2548. I have spent my entire career in the agricultural industry, and I have found agricultural producers to be fair, thoughtful employers. I ask that you oppose HB 2548. Best Regards, Robert Wymore President/CEO
Diamond Fruit Growers