



## **Senate Committee on Judiciary**

### **Oregon Farm Bureau Support for SB 703**

**March 19, 2025**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of SB 703. Oregon Farm Bureau (OFB) is the state's most inclusive agriculture organization, proudly representing over 6500 family farms and ranches that produce more than 220 agricultural commodities. From hops and hazelnuts to cattle, cranberries, and timber with operations spanning from just a few acres to thousands, our members utilize all farming methods including organic, conventional, regenerative, biotech, and even no-tech.

For decades, the federal government has failed to provide farmers and ranchers with a workable, modernized system to sustain a legal and reliable workforce. Nationally, it is estimated that nearly 45% of the agricultural workforce lacks proper authorization. Farmers want to do the right thing and comply with employment laws, but the current labor shortages and cumbersome visa programs create significant barriers. While we continue to advocate for federal immigration reform that provides a clear and legal pathway for workers, bills like SB 703 can help address some of the challenges faced by responsible agricultural employers and their employees.

There is broad agreement that our immigration system needs reform. However, any changes must ensure that vital industries—such as farming and food production—are not disrupted. With food costs already a concern, maintaining a stable workforce is essential to food security. If workers are fearful of seeking legal status or unable to navigate the system, farms may struggle to bring in harvests, impacting both agricultural businesses and consumers.

Legal representation is an important part of navigating the complex immigration process. SB 703 provides financial assistance to individuals seeking to adjust their immigration status or obtain permanent residency. This type of support aligns with services that some larger state Farm Bureaus offer as a benefit to their members. While we support this effort, we want to emphasize that any pathway to legal status must prioritize law-abiding individuals who are established employees within the community. We recognize the value that these farmworkers bring to Oregon agriculture and our communities.

For these reasons, OFB supports SB 703 and encourages its passage.