

Submitter: Mary Martinez-Wenzl
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006
Co-Chair Lieber, Co-Chair Sanchez, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to urge your support for essential workers across industries across the state.

My name is Dr. Mary Martinez-Wenzl and I live in Portland.

Right now in Oregon, two essential workforces face critical challenges that hurt us all, farmworkers and longterm care workers.

Over 72,000 Oregon farmworkers, who put food on our tables and contribute over \$6.4 billion to our state's economy, lack basic protections and earn an average of just \$34,500 annually. Most farmworkers are immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala, and Central America, many of whom speak an Indigenous language.

Meanwhile, care workers, who are 80% women and predominantly people of color, face severe economic hardship due to meager wages. Half of care workers must rely on public assistance, and 41% live near poverty despite many positions being funded by public dollars. While Oregon urgently needs 65,000 more care providers by 2030, current conditions make it one of the hardest positions to fill and retain workers. It is past time that these historically excluded workers have a voice in setting industry standards, access to fair wages and safe conditions, and protection from retaliation.

Workforce standards boards set meaningful standards with real enforcement power and accountability to support stable workforces ready to meet growing needs in the state.

When workers have a voice in setting standards, entire industries thrive. Oregon must not fall behind as other states discover that bringing workers and employers together creates more stable, innovative workplaces.

Sincerely,
Mary Martinez-Wenzl
Portland, OR