

Action Alert – “NO” on House Bill 2548

The stakes couldn't be higher for producers! We need all-hands-on-deck to defend your ability to operate a farm or ranch in Oregon.

Unions and trial attorneys introduced [HB 2548](#), which creates a workforce standards board for agriculture. These special interests do not want to spend the time or money to unionize farm by farm, so they are proposing a “workforce standards board” to bargain our workforce at the sector level!

HB 2548 include two provisions that effectively “unionize” farm work at the industry level:

- (1) Creates an **unelected governing body with the authority to set increased regulations** for Oregon farms at least EVERY TWO YEARS:
 - a. Set higher minimum wage (est. over \$20);
 - b. Set piece-rate wages;
 - c. Establish requirements for rest breaks, work schedules and working hours;
 - d. Provide uniform training on worker rights by state-certified worker organizations (i.e. unions and trial attorneys); and
 - e. Establish new workplace health and safety requirements in addition to those already adopted by OR-OSHA.
- (2) **Eliminates at-will employment** for agriculture and dictates how farm employers can discipline or terminate workers. HB 2548 creates a private right of action against employers who make termination or disciplinary decisions that an employee or trial attorney disagrees with.

This legislation would make it so expensive and risky to employ people, that many farms would have no choice but to reduce their footprint in Oregon, layoff employees, or sell to the highest bidder. *What a nightmare!*

Instructions:

Calling all employers.... send comments to the House Committee on Labor & Workforce Standards OPPOSING [House Bill 2548](#) by **Wednesday, March 12th**.

- Send your **emailed testimony through [this link](#)**.
- Sign up to **testify verbally through OLIS (click “[Register to Testify](#)”)** but please know that time will be limited. It's perfectly alright to testify virtually. We just need people to show up (in writing and for the hearing) and speak up!

Please review the draft letter below and *PERSONALIZE* it for your farm, ranch, nursery or dairy. Legislators need to hear from every impacted farm, ranch, nursery, and dairy. This is the **BIGGEST THREAT** agriculture has ever faced and *will* result in the shutdown of multigenerational operations and loss of farm jobs.

Don't let other farms speak for you. This is one of those moments where the VOLUME of responses matter. If you don't speak up, assume that someone else will—like a labor union or an opportunistic attorney.

[Click here](#) for a link to the coalition comments and [here](#) for a list of existing farmworker protections. The legislature (and OR-OSHA...) has been busy this last decade!

Draft Message:

I'm asking you to oppose HB 2548 because it threatens my ability to keep farming. Oregon already has some of the highest labor costs in the country, and after several tough years, I can't afford more regulations and wage increases.

This bill would give unelected officials the power to set wages and safety rules that go far beyond current protections, adding more regulatory burden to small farms like mine. Farmers know how devastating this regulatory model is. Oregon's state agencies have adopted very harmful regulations in the last five years with little to no accountability for their actions. This board would be no different; its members aren't even elected.

HB 2548 unfairly targets agriculture by taking away at-will employment, meaning I wouldn't be able to make necessary staffing decisions without the risk of costly lawsuits. One claim can cost tens of thousands of dollars or more. I also don't believe that farms should be forced keep employees who may not meet performance expectations or adapt to the demands of the job. All other sectors in Oregon would be at-will, but farms—whose employment needs are impacted by weather, yields, trade, market conditions, pests, diseases, etc.—would not. Not only is that unfair, but it will likely result in job loss, not job security.

This bill doesn't help workers or consumers; it just makes farming harder and more expensive. I have already had to reduce hours for workers to comply with agricultural overtime, and HB 2548 would have more severe consequences.

I urge you to vote no to protect our farms and jobs.