



Locally Grown
and
GROWING STRONG

**Chair Dexter, Vice Chairs Helfrich and Gamba
House Committee on Housing and Homelessness
Oregon Farm Bureau Supports Agricultural Workforce Housing Grants
February 28, 2023**

The Oregon Farm Bureau Federation (OFB) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments today in support of Section 67 of the -11 amendment to HB 2001. As a reference, OFB is the state's largest trade association representing over 6,000 family farms and ranches actively engaged in production agriculture.

The last three years have been immensely challenging for Oregon's family farms and ranches, many of whom operate on extremely thin margins and lack the financial resources to make the modifications necessary to comply with new workplace safety regulations. In 2020, Oregon OSHA (OR-OSHA) made significant changes to its field sanitation and on-farm housing regulations in response to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. The most significant change was the requirement to reduce capacity within the housing, which forced growers to look to alternative housing for employees or reduce their workforce. In 2021, wildfire smoke and heat regulations were adopted, adding a new layer of regulations to on-farm housing and field work whenever the air quality index exceeds 101 or when the heat index exceeds 80 degrees Fahrenheit. These new rules require investments in air purifiers, window shades, cooling vests, thermometers, and other tools in order to ensure on-farm housing meets OR-OSHA requirements.

In addition to recently adopted OR-OSHA rules, OFB, other agricultural organizations, and worker advocacy groups have been engaged in a multi-year rulemaking at OR-OSHA to update agricultural workforce housing regulations. There are approximately 50 regulatory changes currently under consideration, and OR-OSHA has not yet determined what regulatory changes it will pursue or if the agency will apply the rules retroactively to existing on-farm housing (date of release for these changes is the end of 2023). Suggested regulatory amendments include electrical panel updates, additional outlets, air conditioning units, additional sinks and toilets, additional washing machines, new mattresses or mattress covers, enclosed kitchens, among many other improvements. The potential cost burden to farm and ranch families is enormous, and OFB appreciates the opportunity to allow farmers improve on-farm housing in anticipation of new agricultural workforce housing rules.

OFB supports the proposed agricultural workforce housing grant program in Section 67 of the -11 amendment. The program will provide needed financial assistance to farmers struggling under the weight of increased regulatory and inflationary pressures and allow them to make health and safety improvements to agricultural workforce housing this year.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments regarding HB 2001. Please contact Lauren Kuenzi (lkuenzi@oregonfb.org) on behalf of the Oregon Farm Bureau Federation with any questions related to these comments.