

**Comments before the Senate Committee on Rural Communities and Economic
Development
Senate Bill 7-2- Oregon State Fair and Exposition Center
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past Oregon Dairy Products Commission Intern
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Chair Roblan and members of the Committee. My name is Jessica Budge, I am currently a student at Oregon State University, a former Oregon Dairy Princess-Ambassador, and this past summer I worked as an intern with the Oregon Dairy Products Commission who is a sponsor and participant at the Oregon State Fair. I am here today in support of Senate Bill 7-2.

My experiences with the Oregon State Fair have been plentiful and diverse. I began as a youth exhibitor in FFA exhibiting my dairy cattle projects, then as the State Dairy Princess-Ambassador, a Red Barn Volunteer, and finally as a summer intern of the Oregon Dairy Products Commission. Throughout my time in all of these roles I have gained experiences unmatched by anything else.

I am not here to complain or list issues that I have with the Oregon State Fair but rather express to you the meaning and purpose that the fair has had for me and articulate the potential I see for the State Fair and strong desire that I have for this tradition to continue to grow and flourish.

I would like to first start by describing my experiences as a livestock exhibitor. As a member of FFA I had the opportunity to exhibit my animals at the Oregon State Fair. Words cannot express the kinds of lessons that I gained from this experience. Skills such as work ethic, dedication, and the entire attitude of sportsmanship are all encompassed in this one experience. These skills can not only be learned from exhibiting animals but also static exhibits, nursery, cooking, sewing, display boards, and so much more. These are skills that young people can only learn from doing and the state fair provides that incentive and venue. And while exhibiting at the fair leads to lack of sleep, stressful show days, and days of fair food I want these opportunities to be available for generations to come. I would love nothing more than for my children to have the chance to participate in the festivities of State Fair and share with them the memories and lessons I learned just as my father has done to me.

Fast-forward a couple of years and I was at the State Fair again, all 11 days this time in a dress with a crown on my head as the 2011 Oregon Dairy Princess-Ambassador. The state fair is one of the main events for the program and provides excellent opportunities for talking with the public and informing people about the dairy industry. During the course of the state fair hundreds of people have the opportunity see first-hand a working milking parlor and the dairy princess-ambassadors share what is going on. To me this is another huge purpose of the state fair for the public to see and learn about agriculture in a tangible and hands on way. But the entire dairy ambassador program would not even be possible without the Oregon State Fair.

The dairy princess-ambassador program is funded and run by the Oregon Dairy Women, who gain a vast majority of their annual funds by the sales of dairy desserts by volunteers at

the Red Barn. Not having this venue to sell delicious shakes, cones, and sundaes would be devastation to this group of women that provide thousands of dollars in scholarships and support to youth events each year. The state fair makes this fundraising opportunity available for this group and so many more like it.

Finally, this past summer my role at the state fair brought me away from the barns and into the Jackman Long Building where I worked many hours at the Oregon Dairy Products Commission's booth. Here I had the opportunity to gain professional experiences with customer relations and answering questions from the public. Again, the State Fair provided the opportunity to build skills and gain knowledge.

But this past year, from the very first time I walked into the building and I was shocked by the decline in participation in many of the exhibits and while I do not know the exact numbers there were visibly less people and participants than year's prior. This was also the case back in the livestock barns, a mere 8 Holsteins were exhibited. Exhibitors chose to take their animals to other fairs and forego participation at the Oregon State Fair based on a variety of reasons. Lack of accommodation and hospitality, low premiums, and restricting rules were all reasons given. All of which could most likely be solved given different administrative allowances.

The experiences that I have had with the Oregon State Fair have been diverse. Each opportunity has given me new professional skills and abilities that have already served me well as I have pursued other internships and student leadership activities. I am confident that I will fall back on these experiences in my future career.

While I am the first to admit that I am not versed in every detail of the bill I do know enough to know that it will put the State Fair on the right track for future prosperity and success and provide opportunities to young people like me to be involved in activities and summer employment and gain valuable life experiences. I strongly urge your support of SB 7-2. Thank you for this opportunity to testify here this afternoon. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

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