Comments before the Senate Committee on Rural Communities and Economic Development
Senate Bill 7 – Oregon State Fair and Exposition Center
Leah Perkins-Hagele, President
Oregon Fairs Association
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Chair Roblan and members of the Committee, I am Leah Perkins-Hagele, President, Oregon Fairs Association and Manager of the Washington County Fair Complex in Hillsboro. I am pleased to offer support for Senate Bill 7 -2 Amendment.

The Oregon Fairs Association is the statewide organization made up of Oregon's 36 county fairs, the Oregon State Fair and 150 businesses that provide goods and services to the fair industry. OFA supports SB 7 and the –2 amendments.

First I want to recognize the outstanding work of Lisa Van Laanen who has dedicated so much effort to reaching out to every conceivable State Fair interest group, seeking input on how to improve the fair. Her open–minded and solution–orientated approach has been truly inspiring.

The struggles of the state fair in recent years are well known. While the fair itself has had some measure of financial stability the entire operation of the organization has not. To address the issues confronting the fairgrounds will require bold action and SB 7 represents the best opportunity at this time.

The Oregon State Fair is a critical part of the Oregon fair family. Many competitions for youth and adults at county fairs result in the opportunity to compete at the State Fair. The State Fair is our equivalent of the state playoffs so prominent in high school sports, music and other competitions involving people from every corner of Oregon. Loss of the State Fair would be felt throughout the state not just in the Salem area.

By allowing the State Fair to operate as an enterprise, directed by an interested and enthusiastic board, the Legislature would create the best chance for the fair to continue its tradition of celebrating everything that is so good about our state.

On behalf of the county fairs in Oregon, we urge you to approve SB 7 and the -2 amendments.