



Testimony of Kelly Ross
House Committee on Economic Development
Public Hearing on HB 2613
February 27, 2019

Chair Lively, and Committee members, good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. My name is Kelly Ross, representing the Oregon Fairs Association.

On behalf of OFA's Board of Directors, 37 Fair Members, and Service Members, we're pleased to offer our support for HB 2613 and appreciate Rep. Smith's initiative in introducing it.

State assistance to county fairs in developing five and ten-year capital construction plans would have a very significant beneficial impact on the future of county fairs in this state for a number of reasons.

First, county fairs and fairgrounds are at a nearly all-time high in terms of attendance and events. In 2018, total fair attendance was over 1.75 million people, the highest level in the last 15 years. For comparison purposes, this is 29% more than the total combined attendance at all 2018 home games for the Oregon and Oregon State football teams, and the Portland Trail Blazers.

In addition, total non-fair attendance at more than 17,000 events throughout 2018 brought in an additional 4.4 million people to fairgrounds. And fairgrounds are increasingly being used by first responders as staging areas for wildfires, local emergencies, and venues for public safety training and health clinics.

At the same time as fairground usage is increasing, however, facilities in general are old and need updating. Such updating unfortunately is many times done in a haphazard manner, without a clearly defined long-term construction plan in mind due to extremely limited resources to pay for consulting advice at many fairs.

Fairgrounds are the hub of their communities and act as a magnet for countless events that fill motel rooms, crowd restaurants, and boost local economies. HB 2613 would provide much needed financial support to county fairs to take a giant step in mapping out their future construction and financial needs to ensure that fairground facilities will continue to adequately serve local and state needs.

We urge your support of HB 2613.