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June 24, 2020

Chair Senator Peter Courtney
Chair Representative Tina Kotek
Joint Interim Committee on the First Special Session of 2020
State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301
Sent via electronic mail to j1ss.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

Re: Support for HB 4206 – State Inspection Program for Meat Product Processing and Sales

Dear Chairs Courtney and Kotek and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 4206. 1000 Friends of Oregon is a nonprofit membership organization that has worked with Oregonians for more than 40 years to support livable urban and rural communities; protect family farms, forests, and natural areas; and provide transportation and housing choice.

By passing HB 4206, the legislature would be taking a right step forward to address the current shortage of meat processing plants in Oregon staffed by federal meat inspectors. If the Department of Agriculture was granted authority, and rules were established, to allow for a state meat inspection program that mirrored the federal program, more opportunities for meat processing in Oregon could occur. Oregon would join 27 other states in the nation that have taken advantage of the state meat processing and inspection program.

COVID-19 impacts to the supply chain have demonstrated how vulnerable food systems are, and the importance of having sufficient processing facilities within the state. I am aware of at least one producer that had a reservation at a meat processing facility revoked due to COVID-19. Passage of HB 4206 would help put the state on the right path to address the need for more processing facilities. Yet even if this bill becomes law, significant work still needs to occur to address the need, including the establishment of long-term funding streams for the inspection program.

Thank you,
Scott Hilgenberg
Rural Lands Legislative Attorney