

February 2, 2021

Chair Witt and Members of the Committee:

**Oregon needs more meat processing capacity**, which is why the legislature recently enacted the [State Meat Inspection Program](#). However, the State Meat Inspection Program needs a concurrent grant fund to help expand processing capacity, especially in rural Oregon.

The Northeast Oregon Economic Development District serves entrepreneurs, businesses and communities in Baker, Union and Wallowa counties. For over a decade we have participated in research and business development efforts to increase opportunities for meat-producers in our region to add value to their products, including through direct-to-consumer, branded beef programs, and retail/wholesale markets. We have also assisted existing and start-up meat processing businesses to obtain capital, assess feasibility, and provide input on policy solutions needed to retain and improve meat-processing infrastructure. As members of the Oregon Community Food System Network, we are aware of how barriers to processing impact not just our region, but producers and processors across Oregon. COVID-19 disruptions to the meat supply chain only further illuminated long-standing deficiencies in Oregon's meat processing infrastructure. These disruptions provide the opportunity to begin taking steps toward building a more sustainable and resilient food system in Oregon.

I am asking you to support [HB 2785](#), which would establish a \$10 million grant program to fund expansion, upgrades, and technical and other necessities, such as equipment, as laid out in the [programs in other states](#). Additional facilities boosting Oregon's processing capacity could:

- Support local, direct to consumer meat sales
- Increase regional food system resilience and rural economic development
- Support producers' ability to donate locally produced meat to food banks and other community assistance programs
- Give producers greater control over the price they receive for livestock
- Diversify processing options and reduce risk of processing bottlenecks
- Allow producers to find a local facility to slaughter and process livestock in remote locations across Oregon
- Reduce transportation time and costs for producers, and lessening carbon footprints

Thank you,



Lisa Dawson  
Executive Director