

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2785

Chair Witt and Members of the Committee:

My name is Robin Willie Bonn. I am a beef and lamb producer in Eugene, Oregon.

Oregon desperately needs more meat processing capacity, which is why the legislature recently enacted the [State Meat Inspection Program](#). However, to be truly successful, the State Meat Inspection Program needs a concurrent grant fund to help expand processing capacity, especially in rural 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
- Reduce transportation time and costs for producers, and lessening carbon footprints

Oregon's already acute lack of meat processing capacity has been severely strained during Covid-19, as industrial meat processing facilities were closed by virus outbreaks and out-of-state producers sent meat to the Pacific Northwest for processing, taking away precious processing slots for Oregon farmers and ranchers. Increased demand for local meat also further taxed an already burdened system, with even seasoned producers lamenting the loss of processing slots

Having a successful State Meat Inspection program is important to me because I have animals that I sell directly to consumers. After Covid struck there wasn't any meat slaughtering facilities that had space available to slaughter animals. I called in August 2020 and the next available slot to get a lamb slaughtered was May of 2021. I lost multiple sales because I wasn't able to get the animals slaughtered. Having more slaughter capacity would provide jobs in the community and increase the farm income of producers who make much for money selling directly to consumers. Consumers also save a tremendous amount by buying directly from producers.

Thank you,

Robin Willie Bonn

