

Joint Ways and Means Committee
Re: Testimony for Fair Funding,
Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee

My name is Gary Wertz, I am the manager of the Yamhill County Fairgrounds in McMinnville Oregon. I come to you to request that you allocate funding for fairs in Oregon. Last year was a rough year for our fair as we are considered a enterprise department of the county. With not being able to hold events here, we had to lay off our maintenance staff and only have my Office Manager and myself doing all the maintenance work plus managing the facility.

Our facility is an older facility and takes a lot of care to keep it in a useable condition for the public. Even in these conditions we still hosted the Department of Agriculture and Oregon State University's PPE give away. We have also hosted various Covid testing and flu shot clinics. We then hosted the Covid shots for first responders for our county.

Through all of this, the fires came along and we, with no staff opened the facility to house people and animals displaced by the fires. We took in people from 5 different county's and housed over 750 animals for 11 days. We were only able to do this because of a great volunteer network that came out of the woodworks to help which amounted to 410 volunteers over the 11 days. We found out after, that FEMA and the other programs would not allow any funds to offset the cost because they were considered farm animals and we were a county department.
We would do it again without concern of help offsetting the cost.

That's what fairgrounds do. We are here in the good times and bad. Since 1854 The Yamhill County Fair has served the citizens of this great state and will continue to serve no matter what. But we need help to keep these facilities up and safe for the public to come and enjoy. We are just as relevant now as we were when that first fair was held in Lafayette and the territory all those years ago.

So please consider helping fund fairgrounds across Oregon, so they may continue to keep the facilities in good repair and be open to the public that uses them.

Thank you.

Gary Wertz, Manager
Yamhill County Fair
McMinnville, Or