

February 2021

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2785

Chair Witt and Members of the Committee:

My name is Karin Stutzman. I am a producer in Monmouth, 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...

There aren't enough small qualified and professional niche meat processors to support locally raised beef and other livestock processing requests. Without more competition from more processors, the few that are available within an hour or more from my home raise their processing costs several times a year, causing my customer's to not understand the sudden changes and frankly the lack of transparency, leaving me to explain why things are changing so quickly and to overcome their objections to it, for me and for the butchers. Especially in these times, people don't want to be gouged more on an ever-increasing scale, with no checks and balances from the market. My community is highly interested in custom exempt meat purchasing and this grant funding will help expand our local market in the mid-Willamette Valley and provide this highly desired service. Polk County has a robust farming community with many small producers wanting to market their custom exempt and retail meat locally to local stores without all the middlemen costs and fees as some of us may have to sell to only a few commercial buyers far away at their inflated prices to stores and communities far away from here. Covid -19 has driven the demand for custom exempt "locker beef" to new proportions and there are many willing, local producers who are here to dive into that market to provide hyper-local quality meats to our community, but we will need more small processors to help expand the market.

Thank you,

Karin Stutzman