

Submitter: Chantelle Hylton

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Economic Development and Small Business

Measure: HB2909

To the House Committee on Economic Development:

My name is Chantelle Hylton. I own a small restaurant on the Oregon Coast, in the rural town of Wheeler on the Nehalem Bay. We opened in 2018 and have, thankfully, weathered the pandemic and retained our core employees. We re-open Valentine's Day Weekend after a much-needed winter break and look forward to the season ahead. I also own a small farm that serves the restaurant and our community, and own and operate a delivery service that helps independent producers get their products up and down the coast and in to Portland. My life's work has turned to supporting our regional food system at the ground level. If you ever find yourselves in Wheeler, please do come 'taste the coast' - we source most of our scratch ingredients directly from the hands of the farmers, fishers, ranchers and food producers we're fortunate to have as neighbors and call friends and partners in this increasingly resilient food ecosystem.

The Oregon Coast Visitors Association is a strong proponent and champion of this resilience. OCVA has helped my businesses in countless ways, as they do so many independent, family-run enterprises on the Oregon Coast. Their innovative work to support and grow what could easily and should be such a vibrant, industry-leading Blue Economy is unparalleled. As a seafood and seaweed purchaser, mostly from the hands of the farmers and fishers themselves, I see firsthand the opportunities and barriers present in our work. That something like 90% of the seafood served on the coast isn't local and that fishers who must sell to the 'big guys' are taking a hit so hard on what they can get per pound that many of their businesses have had to fold is tragic when the help exists just around the corner in HB2909 to rejuvenate a once-thriving independent fishing industry. We have photos hanging on the walls of the restaurant from a century ago when a family could make a good living from just one boat. I've been hard pressed to source enough seafood for the restaurant, as many of the fishers have established relationships where all of their catch goes to the big buyers and is shipped out of state - not by choice but because they have no other option - no infrastructure, no support, often no hope.

The Oregon Coast Visitors Association and specifically the work of Kristen Penner, Regional Value Chain Coordinator, has them poised to bridge the gaps, connect local producers with local buyers, create co-packing facilities and shared commercial kitchens producers could never afford on their own, and innovate completely new systems for producer support and buyer access. As a producer, buyer, and consumer on the Oregon Coast with life experience in large international cities, I can attest to

the potential for Oregon to lead, internationally, the creation of a vibrant, inclusive, productive Blue Economy with OCVA at the helm. This work will simultaneously support the coast's independent agricultural producers and independent markets, restaurants and chefs, as we are a close-knit community and share ideas, resources, and customers. With this focus we share, we would band together to support the work of OCVA to ensure a bright future for our regional food system. The work has all been done to start right away with sufficient funding - this bill and the modest \$1.2 million request could, literally and unexaggeratedly, pay off two hundredfold within a matter of years. The ripple effect to other coastal communities and food systems in general would be dazzling. I use these words with trust and excitement, as my belief that vibrant, healthy food systems can change the world fuels most everything I do.

Please vote yes on HB 2909 and help springboard Oregon to the forefront, internationally, as a food system thought innovator and leader. The Oregon Coast Visitors Association is the organization to take us there.

Warmly,  
Chantelle Hylton

The Salmonberry  
Salmonberry Farm  
North Coast Commons  
Wheeler Donuts