



# WASHINGTON COUNTY OREGON

January 26, 2023

To: House Committee on Economic Development and Small Business  
Re: Support for HB 2911

Dear, Chair Bynum, Vice Chairs Morgan and Nguyen, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Washington County Fair Complex, and all 36 County Fairgrounds in the State of Oregon supporting HB 2911.

Like many businesses in the state, Fairgrounds were required to close and cease all operations in March 2020. Fairgrounds were required to remain closed through 2020, and we were able to open under very limited conditions in late 2021 through early 2022. During this period, County Fairs were not able to operate resulting in lost gate, parking, and concert receipts, and lost payments from our food & beverage, commercial vendors, and carnival partners.

We were also not able to operate our year-round rental business. With no revenue coming in for a long period of time, all Fairgrounds had to make tough financial decisions which caused mass layoffs of staff, shuttered property, and minimal or no maintenance of already aging Fairgrounds.

For Washington County alone, in 2020 our estimated revenue loss for the County Fair and our year-round rental business was just over \$4 million dollars.

Activities at Fairgrounds drive economic development in our communities. When factoring in all 36 County Fairs the loss of the 2020 and 2021 revenue flowing into and supporting our local economy is staggering.

In times of need, Fairgrounds always answer the call to assist their communities. In 2020 we were asked to host COVID testing sites, which later turned into vaccination sites. During the devastating fires in the Fall of 2020, Fairgrounds across the state stepped up to take in evacuated people and livestock. All without staff and without funds.

Unfortunately Fairs and Fairgrounds were not eligible for any federal or state pandemic relief programs due to being publicly owned property. Fairgrounds in Oregon are publicly owned properties, but we do not receive funding from our Counties, we operate as special or enterprise funds only spending what we earn operating our County Fairs and Year-Round Rental businesses.

Making Fairgrounds eligible for grant funds through HB 2911 would enable Fairgrounds to:

- Recover costs associated with serving our communities in time of need for COVID testing, vaccination, and fire evacuation sites.
- Allow us to bring back staff in order to return to full operation of our rental business and County Fairs, driving economic development in our communities.
- Apply funds toward the maintenance that was deferred during the pandemic due to lack of revenue.

Thank you for your consideration.

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