

Submitter: Jason Wilson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business

Measure: SB1038

My name is Jason Wilson and I am in favor of SB1038 that would study funding of repairs to rodeos located in rural communities of our state. I currently serve as the volunteer horse superintendant for the Coos County Fair and Rodeo located in Myrtle Point Oregon. Since 1912, the Coos County Fair has been the highlight of the summer for many youth and adults in our small rural county. The climax of this annual event is the two night rodeo at the end of the week. Our fair ground's rodeo arena bleachers are packed with spectators who love experiencing the tradition, history, and competition of a truly amazing piece of our state's heritage and culture. The rodeo grounds could also be described as a gathering place for our rural community. Social connections are made, reunions occur and community bonds are strengthened during these events. As we recover from the financial and social health deficits related to the pandemic, the lack of socialization is was of major concern. As we reflect on this period of time, one can easily make the connect as to the importance of the preservation of these events in the future. Like most rodeo grounds across the state, our rodeo grounds are in need of continued maintenance and repair. Due to the cancellation of the 2020 season, funds were limited and little maintenance occurred. This period of dormancy took a toll on all of our facilities. Unfortunately, the lack of funding has plagued our rodeo arena in the past. The historic turn of the century grandstands that showcased our fairgrounds and arena were deemed beyond repair and had to be razed in the early 1990s. This was due to lack of funding needed for the preservation of the structure. Many other historic rodeo grounds across the state are in danger of meeting the same fate as the Coos County Grandstands if efforts are not made to preserve these structures. During the summer months, our arena is used on a daily basis. Horse 4-H clubs, horsemen associations, junior rodeo, private riding clinicians, competitive bull riding promoters, team roping promoters, and rodeo royalty competitors all use the arena through out the season. As a 4-H parent and leader, I can testify as to the importance of an adequate facility to house these events. The educational component that surrounds these programs and events is invaluable to the youth that participate. A small group of volunteers ensure the arena is maintained and is safe for all the these events. This includes fixing or replacing fencing, roping, bucking, and stripping chutes to provide a safe environment for the horses and livestock. Having adequate facilities that support the use and ensure the safety of participants, spectators, and animals is paramount to the success of preserving the many historic arenas and structures across rural Oregon.