

COLUMBIA COUNTY

Board of Commissioners Office

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April 14, 2023

To: Joint Ways and Means Committee

From: Columbia County Commissioners

Dear Co-Chair Steiner, Co-Chair Sanchez, Co-Vice Chair Girod, Co-Vice Chair Gomberg, Co-Vice Chair Smith and Members of the Committee:

The Columbia County Fair celebrates 108 years in July 2023. We call the fairgrounds, located outside of St. Helens, the Living Room of Columbia County. The fairgrounds are a vital part of the County and the site of many events from weddings to rodeos. The grounds were used as an evacuation center for people and livestock during wildfires and as a site for covid testing and vaccination events. We have a vision of establishing a multi-use facility to serve as an evacuation center as well as fill a myriad of other needs for county residents.

Our volunteer Fair Board members are the grounds managers and are tasked with raising funds through rentals and events to maintain the grounds with minimal financial assistance available from the Columbia County general fund.

The funding received from the State is a vital source of revenue to maintain the grounds. Additional state funding targeted to deferred maintenance and improvements will ensure the continued operation of our facilities.

We encourage your support for the following:

- Eliminate the cap established 20 years ago and fully fund 1% of lottery funds to county fairs through HB 2510, SB 451, and HB 3079.
- Support HB 2911 which creates a \$10 million grant fund for county fairs negatively impacted by COVID-19.
- Support HB 2948 which creates a \$20 million fund for improvement of fairgrounds that are used as emergency evacuation sites.
- Fund a study and additional capital project improvements to state and county fairgrounds to ensure they can continue as economic, social, cultural, and educational hubs in our communities.

Thank you for your consideration of our requests.

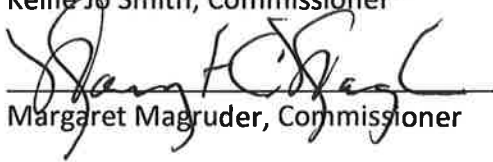
Sincerely,



Casey Garrett, Chair



Kellie Jo Smith, Commissioner



Margaret Magruder, Commissioner