



To: Joint Ways & Means Committee

From: Gary Wertz, Manager/CEO Yamhill County Fair

Re: Vote YES on House Bill 2510

Committee Members:

In 2020 we received a call from a lady that worked in downtown Portland. She had just been informed that a fire was headed towards where her horse was stabled, and they were just given the order to evacuate. She asked where she could go and the only stables, they knew about were under orders to evacuate. She remembered that all the horse shows she went to in her youth was at the Yamhill County Fairgrounds. Within 24 hours we had over 750 evacuated animals and their owners on the fairgrounds. This was a common story at many of fairgrounds at that time. Fairgrounds in Oregon have always opened their doors to help during a time of emergency.

Fairgrounds have always been known as gathering places for youth, adult, cultural, training, Covid Testing, PPE giveaway and many more events beside the county fair. In Yamhill County, the fairgrounds is a major economic generator. Oregon State University calculated that we were at 7 million dollars that was spent in the community, per year! This means visitors to the fairgrounds purchased meals, rooms and supplies at the different business in the county during their stay. Which created jobs, services along with all the ancillary fees and products that goes along with visitors to the county.

The Yamhill County Fairgrounds is an aging facility like most in Oregon. We are not eligible for many of the grants that were available during Covid or the Fires because we are a county department. There is a false assumption that we are a general fund department. We are not, we are an enterprise department and any of the funds we receive to keep the facilities in good repair come from the rentals that are generated at the fairgrounds. In our case the infrastructure goes back to the 30's when we were a US Calvary Training post. And when they left during World War 2 it became a fairgrounds. The main building on the property was built in 1960 and has not had a major upgrade since it was built.

The bill in question would go along ways in helping us keeping the facility in better repairs of what we cannot afford to do now. Capital Repairs has always been a huge issue for most fairgrounds. An example for us would be the lack of restrooms at the fairgrounds. We are moving forward to add and expand restrooms to make them ADA compliant and handle the amount of people we have visiting the facility. Just during fair alone, we have over 10,000 people a day on a 27-acre facility. On the weekends we have 500 to 1000 people here and that's what the facility was set up for during the annual fair. Maintaining facilities like ours is a constant battle. We keep the buildings in the best shape we can with the limited budget we have. We recycle everything form lumber and hardware to be used again to be able to stretch our budgets farther to allow us to do more.

In 1854 the first fair in Oregon was held in the streets of Lafayette, in Yamhill County. We are just as relevant now as we were then. Fairgrounds are the tie that binds us to Past the Present and the Future. With a safe and usable facility, we will be able to teach our youth the skills of the past, to make them be the leaders and thinkers that have made Oregon great.

That why we request that you vote YES to House Bill 2510. It will help preserve what we have and make it last into the future, while teaching another generation the skills of the past.

Thank you for your time.

Gary Wertz, Manager
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