

Chairman Nguyen and members of the committee,

My name is Reva Hartenstein, and I am here today to ask for your support of House Bill 2527. As a sixth-generation Union County resident, I have witnessed and experienced the impact the fairgrounds have on our community. This year, I saw the fair through my four-year-old daughter's eyes as she participated in her first pee wee livestock show and submitted produce for the horticulture contest that she helped grow from our garden. While she won't remember what the bathrooms looked like or how the sewer infrastructure worked, she will remember the Union County Fairgrounds as an important place in our community. In order for the fair to continue to be a place of connection, learning, growth, and shelter, we need to update and replace critical sewer and plumbing infrastructure. HB 2527 would provide us with the necessary funds to complete this project.

The Union County Fair has a long and cherished history, dating back over 150 years. Each year, the fair draws thousands of visitors, with recent attendance exceeding 18,000 people during its four-day event. For a rural county with a population of around 26,000, the numbers demonstrate the impact this space has. This last year alone over 200 participants brought animals, art, food, preserved goods, and more to showcase.

But the impact of the fairgrounds extends far beyond the annual fair itself. Our fairgrounds serve as a year-round hub for community events — from 4-H meetings and livestock shows to emergency response coordination and charitable fundraisers. At the annual Holiday Bazaar this year over 25 businesses showcased their locally made items. In 2024 the fairgrounds hosted over 30 community events throughout the year. In a time when people feel more and more disconnected from their communities, it just makes sense to do all we can to make sure community spaces can serve their purpose.

The funding from House Bill 2527 would allow us to repair aging septic and water facilities, improve accessibility, and expand community programming — ensuring the fairgrounds remain a safe, welcoming, and functional space for our region year-round. Utilizing port-a-potties has been a short-term fix to a long-term problem- and I think I speak for any parent of young children- the combination of port-a-potties, hot summer days, livestock, fair food, and children is a recipe for chaos- not to mention the accessibility issues it poses for others with different accessibility needs.

For rural communities like ours, these facilities are irreplaceable. House Bill 2527 is crucial to ensuring the continued upkeep and improvement of this vital resource. Investing in our fairgrounds means investing in the heart of our rural communities. I urge you to support HB 2527 and help preserve this invaluable asset for generations to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Reva Hartenstein
Imbler, Oregon