

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1524

Chair Meek, Vice Chair Drazen, and Honorable Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Richard Scheidt. I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 1524 and the targeted, responsible approach it takes to supporting Oregon's horse racing industry and the rural and Main Street economies that depend on it.

SB 1524 amends ORS 565.447 to allocate a modest, clearly defined portion of Oregon State Lottery net proceeds—three-tenths of one percent—to a newly established Horse Racing Account. This account is separate from the General Fund, continuously appropriated to the Oregon Racing Commission, and subject to existing constitutional protections and priority obligations. Importantly, these funds are reinvested directly into Oregon communities.

As reinforced in ORS 565.446, the Legislature has long recognized that supporting county fairs and horse racing events promotes economic development by expanding—or preventing the decline of—local businesses. SB 1524 advances that finding by ensuring stable funding for horse racing events held at county fairgrounds, including in Crook, Josephine, Tillamook, and Union counties.

The bill clearly limits the use of Horse Racing Account funds to practical, community-centered purposes: maintaining tracks, supporting purse money to attract competitive participants, funding veterinarians and medical professionals, purchasing safety equipment, covering operating costs such as security and insurance, and investing in infrastructure that protects the safety and well-being of horses and jockeys. These expenditures directly translate into local jobs, visitor spending, and increased economic activity in rural towns.

A stable in-state racing circuit is also essential to the survival of off-track wagering operations, many of which are locally owned small businesses. These businesses rely on Oregon-based racing to keep wagering dollars local, support employment, and contribute to the surrounding hospitality and service economy. Without policies like SB 1524, Oregon risks losing wagering activity to out-of-state markets, draining revenue from the very communities lottery funds are intended to support.

SB 1524 represents a balanced investment: constitutionally compliant, carefully targeted, and focused on keeping economic activity rooted in Oregon communities.

I respectfully urge your support for Senate Bill 1524.

Thank you for your consideration.

Richard Scheidt