

Submitter: Connie Erickson  
On Behalf Of: Oregon Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association  
Committee: Senate Committee On Commerce and General Government  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1524

Chair Meek and Members of the Committee:

My name is Connie Erickson. I am President of the Oregon Thoroughbred Owners & Breeders Association. Additionally my husband, Lee, and I are Oregon Thoroughbred owners and breeders.

I strongly support SB 1524 and commend Senator Hayden for bringing forward legislation that directly addresses the long term health of Oregon's horse racing industry. This bill recognizes that a viable racing program does not happen by accident—it requires deliberate investment in quality, safety, and opportunity.

We are particularly supportive of Section 3(2), which directs resources toward purse money and jockey incentives. These provisions are essential. Competitive purses are what attract and retain quality horses, owners, and jockeys. Without them, Oregon simply cannot compete with neighboring states, and the economic activity tied to racing leaves with them.

SB 1524 also makes critical investments in safety equipment and track improvements. These measures improve conditions for both horses and jockeys, reinforce Oregon's commitment to animal welfare and worker safety, and help ensure racing is conducted responsibly and sustainably.

Just as important, this bill supports economic activity in rural Oregon.

We breed to race.

That commitment requires significant, long term investment. Over the past several years, we have intentionally worked to improve the quality of Thoroughbreds bred in Oregon. In 2019, we purchased the Kentucky bred stallion Rise Up and followed former Oregon Racing Commission Chairman Diego Conde's call to bring better broodmares to this state. We have since added several high quality mares to our breeding program, including Unaquoi, who earned more than \$425,000 during her racing career. Rise Up himself won over \$1.2 million and has produced stakes winners every year his offspring have raced.

These investments are not abstract—they translate directly into economic activity here in Oregon. We purchase approximately 100 tons of hay annually from Oregon

growers, buy bedding from local mills, and make regular grain purchases from Wilco. We support Oregon veterinarians, farriers, and feed suppliers, and we provide steady employment for trainers and farm workers. These expenditures are typical across Oregon's Thoroughbred breeding community.

Horses are an agricultural product that generate new dollars. That money circulates locally, supporting small businesses, sustaining rural jobs, and strengthening community resilience.

Without breeders, there are no Oregon bred horses. Without Oregon bred horses, out of state horses fill the starting gates. When that happens, the feed purchases, veterinary work, labor, and investment occur in other states—not in Oregon. SB 1524 helps keep that economic activity here. What breeders and owners are asking for are racing opportunities and purse levels that make continued investment in Oregon both rational and sustainable.

This bill is not a subsidy—it is a strategic investment in safety, agriculture, rural economies, and an industry that returns value to the state many times over.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of SB 1524.