

Submitted by:

Connie Erickson

President, Oregon Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association (OTOBA)

Introduction

Chair Broadman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Connie Erickson, and I'm President of the Oregon Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association (OTOBA). On behalf of our members, I respectfully submit this testimony in support of **Senate Bill 1524**.

This testimony focuses on the **economic and fiscal implications** of Senate Bill 1524 and its relevance to Oregon's agricultural sector, rural economies, and employment base.

Economic Contribution of Oregon Horse Racing

Oregon's thoroughbred horse racing industry functions as a **multiplier economic engine**, supporting agriculture, skilled labor, and small businesses across the state. The industry generates sustained economic activity through:

- Ongoing purchases of agricultural inputs such as hay, grain, bedding, and veterinary supplies
- Employment for trainers, jockeys, grooms, stable workers, farriers, veterinarians, and support staff
- Indirect and induced economic activity in transportation, equipment, feed suppliers, and professional services

In addition to direct industry spending, live racing events attract visitors to rural communities, increasing demand for lodging, food service, fuel, and retail purchases. These tourism-related expenditures provide a measurable benefit to local tax bases and help stabilize rural economies.

According to data sourced from the Crooked River Roundup website, the Roundup attracts over 25,000 visitors. The Association puts on two separate events that include a rodeo and the largest parimutuel horse races in the State of Oregon, creating a significant benefit to the Prineville area.

Workforce, Small Business, and Equity Impacts

The Thoroughbred industry in Oregon is largely composed of **small businesses**, many of which are owned and operated by **women and minorities**. According to the Oregon Racing Commission there are 770 licensed owners, 29.6% of which are women. Additionally there are 259 trainers licensed by the state and 25% of these are women. I'm one of those licensed owners – I operate a Thoroughbred breeding farm near Sublimity. We breed to race and like most breeders in the Northwest we send our horses to tracks in Oregon and Washington. These businesses operate on thin margins and rely on consistent racing opportunities and wagering activity to remain viable.

Recent declines in the industry have had a disproportionate economic impact on these operators, resulting in lost income, reduced employment, and diminished agricultural demand. Senate Bill 1524 would help stabilize this sector by improving its long-term economic sustainability and preserving jobs tied directly to rural and agricultural economies.

Wagering Revenue and Fair Reinvestment

The expansion of the Oregon Lottery has significantly altered the state's wagering landscape. Lottery growth has redirected discretionary wagering dollars away from horse racing, reducing a historically important revenue stream for the industry.

While the state has benefited fiscally from lottery revenues, the horse racing industry has experienced a corresponding economic contraction. Senate Bill 1524 represents a **targeted reinvestment strategy**, recognizing the role horse racing played in establishing Oregon's wagering base and ensuring that a portion of wagering-related economic activity continues to support agricultural employment and rural commerce.

From a fiscal perspective, this approach supports **economic diversification**, preserves existing economic infrastructure, and helps prevent further erosion of an industry that already delivers measurable economic returns.

Conclusion

Senate Bill 1524 is a fiscally responsible opportunity to strengthen Oregon's rural economies, support agricultural production, and sustain jobs without creating a new industry or infrastructure. The bill leverages existing economic activity and reinvests in a sector with proven economic linkages across agriculture, labor, and tourism.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to support **Senate Bill 1524**.

Thank you for your consideration.