

March 15, 2019

House Committee on Economic Development
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Lively and Committee Members,

Travel Oregon's vision is a better life for all Oregonians through strong, sustainable local economies. This includes enhancing economies throughout the state by helping communities better leverage the state's \$11.8 billion tourism industry. It also means working together to develop facilities, like the James Beard Public Market, that enhance the visitor experience while also positively impacting local businesses across the state.

The James Beard Public Market has an opportunity to support Oregon's agriculture economy by connecting farms to urban consumers in Portland. Travel Oregon is heavily involved in agritourism efforts across the state, with recent efforts including the launch of Oregon Food Trails—a program that has provided an opportunity for visitors to connect with producers, farms and the bounty of a local region. Since the program's launch, participating businesses have reported an immediate increase in visitation and improvement in direct sales. Similarly, the James Beard Public Market will give locals and visitors a chance to become more familiar with Oregon products and inspire them to travel to the farms to learn more about how these products are grown.

Visitors traveling to Oregon frequently cite that culinary experiences inspired their visit. In fact, a 2017 study found that more than 33 percent of marketable special interest overnight trips were focused on exceptional culinary experiences, and beer and wine tours and tastings. The development of the James Beard Public Market presents an opportunity for long-term, sustainable benefits for visitors and locals alike. The market is a sound addition to a flourishing culinary tourism scene, with the added benefit of bolstering the livelihood of rural communities.

Funding for the James Beard Public Market will generate sustainable economic benefits by strengthening the local tourism industry and will improve local livability. Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Todd Davidson
CEO, Travel Oregon