



Testimony before the House Committee on Veterans & Emergency Preparedness

RE: HB2536 and HB2735

March 26, 2019

Chairs Evans, Vice-Chair Lewis, and members of the committee:

My name is Anna Scharf and I am the current Chairman of the Polk County Fair board. I would like to encourage you to pass HB2536 and HB2735 to establish the Open Spaces Task Force on Emergency Preparedness.

The Polk County fairgrounds is located in the heart of Polk County and serves as a hub for the 88,000+ citizens of the county. The fairgrounds consist of 2 large building that are self-contained with restrooms and food preparation capabilities, other secure buildings and covered areas, parking for eight hundred vehicles during the winter months and 1,500+ vehicles during summer months and open spaces to land multiple helicopters. It is located 11 miles from the Salem Hospital, 23 miles from the Corvallis hospital, 6 miles from the Dallas Hospital at the center of two major state highways.

The Polk County fairgrounds is the designated emergency evacuation center for the county and to assist with this potential need, the largest building is already equipped with an emergency generator which provides light, heat, refrigeration for medications and power for emergency communications. It has also been designated as the reunification location for 3 of the 4 public schools in Polk County in the event of a need to evacuate those schools.

The Polk County Fairgrounds is the prime example of an established multi-use location suitable to serve a variety of emergencies. However, aging facilities and limited financial resources, make it a challenge to continue to be prepared to meet the need when and if it arises. The Open Spaces Task force on Emergency Preparedness is a major step in the right direction to assisting the state with identifying these ideal locations and then working on ways to keep them maintained at service levels needed to be able to react when called upon.

I urge the committee to pass HB2536 and HB2735 and work with the Senate to see this taskforce come to fruition.

Regards,

Anna Scharf
Board chair, Polk County Fairgrounds and Event Center