

February 2021

Chair Witt and Members of the Committee,

My name is Katie Gourley. I am a beginning farmer and local food systems advocate in Portland, Oregon.

Oregon desperately needs more meat processing capacity, which is why the legislature recently enacted the State Meat Inspection Program. However, to be truly successful, the State Meat Inspection Program needs a concurrent grant fund to help expand processing capacity, especially in rural Oregon.

I am asking you to support HB 2785, which would establish a \$10 million grant program to fund expansion, upgrades, and technical and other necessities, such as equipment, as laid out in the programs in other states. Additional facilities boosting Oregon's processing capacity could:

Support local, direct to consumer meat sales

Increase regional food system resilience and rural economic development

Support producers' ability to donate locally produced meat to food banks and other community assistance programs

Give producers greater control over the price they receive for livestock

Diversify processing options and reduce risk of processing bottlenecks

Allow producers to find a local facility to slaughter and process livestock in remote locations across

Reduce transportation time and costs for producers, and lessening carbon footprints

Oregon's already acute lack of meat processing capacity has been severely strained during Covid19, as industrial meat processing facilities were closed by virus outbreaks and out of state producers sent meat to the Pacific Northwest for processing, taking away precious processing slots for Oregon farmers and ranchers. Increased demand for local meat also further taxed an already burdened system, with even seasoned producers lamenting the loss of processing slots.

Having a successful State Meat Inspection program is important to me because our small farming community has been extremely fragile and made more so because of the massive disruptions COVID has created in our regional food system's security and the safety and dignity of meat processing workers. Our communities of producers, eaters, and advocates deserve better and it is in your power to move the needle towards a better future for us all.

Thank you,

Katie Gourley, Portland