



February 3, 2021

Dear Chair Witt and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Beef Council, I am writing to add my support of HB 2785.

Oregon Beef Council members are from every corner of the state and are cow/calf producers, dairy representatives, cattle handlers and feeders, and one public member (currently a prominent local chef). We fund research at Oregon State University, do advertising and promotions to improve demand, work on export market development, and conduct other programs to benefit producers.

A silver lining from the last 11 months has been the appreciation of food and agriculture on the part of the people of Oregon during this challenging period. I am proud of the people involved in Oregon production as they work to maintain a healthy food supply for our citizens. I think if you asked Oregonians about possible efforts by the Oregon Legislature to support local agriculture, and especially Oregon beef and meat supplies, you would get a more positive response than any time in recent history. That is understood by farmers and ranchers and I think this bill represents one of the best steps forward to support safe and healthy food produced in Oregon, for Oregonians.

It reminds me of the Oregon Farm to School and School Gardens programs that the Oregon Legislature has increasingly supported, and that the public has embraced. As a recent member of the Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation board, I saw how farmers and ranchers valued these programs.

The State Meat Inspection Program that passed last year was a great step. I have attended many of the follow-up meetings and there are innovative beef producers and processors excited to be working together with the Oregon Department of Agriculture to bring this all together.

Now we need to take the next step and expand local meat processing. HB 2785 would do this with \$10 million in funding to significantly boost Oregon infrastructure, and provide partners for Oregon producers to market local beef. The processing capacity limitations that we saw in 2020 resulted in empty shelves and limited places for local farmers and ranchers to sell cattle that were ready for market. This investment will provide better infrastructure, technology and capacity that will directly benefit Oregon consumers and farmers and ranchers in every part of Oregon.

Thank you for your attention to these comments. I think that if this bill passes the Oregon Beef Council members may consider ways that we might use our budget to fund local promotional activities and projects that might directly assist the intent of this bill. That would be very exciting, and a win-win for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "William N. Wise", is written over a horizontal line.

William N. Wise
Chief Executive Officer