

February 2021

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2785

Chair Witt and Members of the Committee:

My name is Kait Crowley. I am the owner/operator of PK Pastures, an Animal-Welfare-Approved pastured pork and poultry farm on Kalapuya territory near Sweet Home in Linn County. My partner and I are first generation farmers.

Thank you for the opportunity to ask for your support for HB 2785, which would establish a \$10 million grant program to expand Oregon's meat processing capacity. Last summer the legislature took an important step to answer the profound need for more regional processing facilities with the passage of HB 4206, which authorized the creation of a State Meat Inspection Program. Now it's time to make sure the new State Meat Inspection Program has its intended impact by backing it up with real dollars.

[HB 2785](#) as amended would fund construction of new facilities, expansion and upgrades to existing custom-exempt operations, as well as technical assistance and necessary equipment. The small and mid-sized Oregon producers and processors that the State Meat Inspection Program is designed to serve are often strapped for cash and operating on thin margins. We need a leg up to fund the infrastructure necessary for new or upgraded processing facilities. This is especially true for the young, beginning and BIPOC producers who are the future of farming and all experience significant barriers to accessing capital.

Our farm is currently in the planning and design phase for an on-farm processing facility for meat and poultry, and would be ready to build in 2022 if we can secure funding through the proposed grant program. We are working closely with the Oregon Department of Agriculture as we draft our plans and are in conversation

about serving as a case study for on-farm state inspected meat processing facilities.

As a certified Animal-Welfare-Approved operation animal quality of life is important to us and the people we feed. On-farm slaughter is better for animal welfare and reduces stress and travel time for both livestock and farmers. We take great pride in the way we raise our animals, and processing on the farm will give us greater quality control assurance from farrow to finish to freezer.

Even though we always schedule our butcher dates far in advance, because of increased scheduling challenges due to COVID-19 we were bumped from processing slots in 2020 and ended up having to slaughter and butcher our own hogs in the Fall. This meant we couldn't sell meat from those animals to our wholesale account, at farmers' market, or to our CSA members- a major blow to our farm finances. When there's a squeeze, small producers like us are most likely to get the boot from larger facilities. Even on a normal year, USDA processors are overworked.

We know that Oregon's current meat processing infrastructure is overburdened and inadequate, COVID-19 only exacerbated pre-existing challenges. Now it is time to commit to building a resilient local food system. Creating a network of small to mid-sized and on-farm processing facilities in rural communities through the passage of HB 2785 is a smart investment for Oregon's future.

Thank you,

Kait Crowley

Owner/Operator and Swineherd at PK Pastures

Sweet Home

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