

February 2021

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2785

Chair Witt and Members of the Committee:

My name is Heather Rudolph. I am an advocate, producer, and future processor (I'm buying the business now) in Baker City..

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 Covid-19, 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

By building and upgrading more small butcher shops, HB 2785 will decrease the carbon footprint of food production because it will decrease the travel distance for the livestock and for consumers, and it will support sustainable rural economic development in Oregon. For example, Baker County Custom Meats is one of two butcher shops in a county that is the size of the whole state of Connecticut. You can imagine the bottlenecks created when COVID shut down larger companies and there was even more pressure on the existing two

small shops. Also, neither of the shops in Baker County are USDA facilities which greatly limits where the meat can be sold and thus, limits the rural economic contributions of livestock production to the entire state (Think about the tax money we're losing to Idaho).. Funds from HB 2785 will help me transform it into a USDA facility (I am in the process of buying it), becoming the only one for 135 miles and retaining hundreds of thousands of dollars in Oregon which currently go to the facility in Nampa, Idaho. With almost 500,000 cattle in Baker County and the surrounding counties, more butchering facilities in the state have the potential to make a huge difference in rural economic development and regional food system security for Oregonians working in this sustainable industry.

Thank you,

Heather Rudolph
Baker City