



HB 2785 - State Meat Inspection Program Grant Fund

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2785

Dear Chair Witt and Members of the Committee:

My name is Laura Perazzoli. I run a small pig farm, Yachats Forest Farm, in Yachats, OR.

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

Having a successful State Meat Inspection program is important to me because it is critical that I am able to process my meat, and currently it is extremely challenging to get slaughter dates with the few slaughterhouses/meat processing sites in Oregon. We have had to schedule processing dates over a year in advance, however, due to the nature of farming and animal raising, we can't know if our animals will be ready for slaughter when we have to make dates so early (before the animals are even born). Additionally, we currently have to make a 3-4 hour trip in order to process our animals—if there were more, and closer, processing facilities, we would likely be able to produce more high quality, pastured raised meat for our community. The time and distance that it takes to get to our processor, means that we have to limit how many trips we are able to take each season.

This year, because of Covid-19 and the challenge of scheduling slaughter dates with our meat processor, we raised fewer hogs than we might have raised if we were assured we would be able to work with the processor. This year, our local, custom-exempt butcher was so busy that many small producers and farmers in our community were not able to have their meat processed with them. This cost our neighbors in time, money, and customers for their meat. Covid-19 truly underscored how few meat processing facilities we currently have in Oregon. Many farmers had their processing dates canceled or delayed due to the limited capacity of our processing facilities. For us, because our butcher was so overwhelmed by orders this year,



they had to offer fewer options for butchering—which disappointed some of our customers who appreciate the ability to choose which cuts of meat they want.

Please pass HB 2785—this grant is critical for our farmers and rural communities. We cannot grow our farms or support our communities without covering the funding for more processing capacity in our state.

Thank you,

Laura Perazzoli, Yachats OR
PO Box 3 Yachats OR 97498