



March 24, 2021

Dear Chairman Witt and Committee Members

Please accept this written testimony in support of House Bill 3173.

Fairgrounds are not only an economic hub of communities and counties, but they are also a cultural center. This is especially true for the equine industry. Fairgrounds play a vital role in allowing equestrians a place to practice, showcase, and educate youth and the public on our way of life. Many of the over 17,000 events that take place at fairgrounds in Oregon are equine related, and in most cases, there are no alternative facilities that exist for these activities. Without fairgrounds, a significant portion of our trainings, clinics, horse shows, competitions, meetings, and award banquets could cease to exist.

The funding provided by the Oregon Lottery is crucial for fairgrounds to stay functioning, however most fairgrounds across Oregon has deferred maintenance that their annual revenue simply does not cover. The removal of the monetary cap, which was put in place in an era when no one suspected lottery income would expand to the level that it has, prevents fairgrounds from obtaining the funding that they need to implement crucial maintenance and upgrades that make them more flexible for a greater variety of users.

We also want to note that fairgrounds are frequently turned to in times of disaster. Oregonians and government officials expect fairgrounds to handle human and animal evacuations from wildfire and floods, host public gatherings and social events, play a vital role in important outreach such as vaccination clinics, and are instrumental in tourism. Please support these facilities who are supporting Oregonians in their time of need – these facilities rarely are financially refunded for the community support that they provide.

On behalf of thousands of equestrians and equine focused businesses and organizations across Oregon, **we urge you to vote yes on HB 3173**, which will end a funding cap that was put in place years ago limiting the amount of funding that each county fairgrounds are able to receive.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Brandi Ebner

Brandi Ebner, IOM
Executive Director, Oregon Horse Council
Brandi@OregonHorseCouncil.com