



March 24, 2021

Honorable Dan Rayfield  
Oregon State Representative  
900 Court Street NE,  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: HB 3173

Dear Senator Gelser:

My name is Trudy Overlin and I represent the Benton County Event Center and Fairgrounds as the Chair of the Fair Board. In my role as Chair, I feel it is my duty to impress upon you and your colleagues the value and need for maintaining funding for our State's county fairgrounds.

Despite being the home of some of the best in community entertainment and representation of our agricultural heritage that supports our youth, we also exist to assist, when needed, providing resources for those who are displaced by fire, flood, pandemic, or other natural or medical disasters. Fairgrounds came to the aid of our many displaced populations due to the COVID crisis, and the wild fires that ravaged our state this past year. Now more than ever we need your support to continue to serve and remain viable. Our communities, when we can come together will need their county fairs to try to bring back some sense of normal life after a year of isolation in 2020.

As a chair of a fair board, I can tell you firsthand how much our facility means to our community. We host many free events for 4-H (300 events annually), for Rotary (holiday lights and Halloween celebration for families), among other discounted events to assist non-profit organizations. Generations of families, even members who have moved away, return to participate in our fair, or to attend a festival or event. To them, our fairgrounds is a symbol of home.

This past year we opened our doors to provide refuge for un-housed populations to live more safely during the pandemic, and opened our facilities to construct micro shelters for these same populations. We provided both a safe living environment but also access to hygiene facilities and other public assistance.

Our staff assisted other county departments as hiring freezes went in place during the work at home orders of 2020, showing up to their jobs, despite the risk to their own health. They also showed, by example, the proper way to work, wearing appropriate PPE and taking all necessary precautions, ensuring that facilities were kept sanitary.

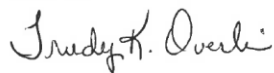
Our auditorium helped to support our Emergency Operations Center for the wild fire rescues and a staging area for disbursement of food and clothing for families who had lost their homes. Our barns were filled with displaced livestock and pets, to help those who lost their farms and property find respite while they determined their next steps. Even our volunteers and amazing 4-H students came to help with these efforts.

Without our facilities, and those of several other counties, these services would have gone unmet.

I know you have been at events at our Event Center and Fairgrounds and you know what it is like to experience a fair, so please keep this in mind as you and your colleagues discuss this house bill and remember the valuable resource, and amazing community event place that all fairgrounds are in this great State of Oregon.

Thank you for your kind consideration of my written testimony. Thank you also for serving our community and keeping an eye out for our wellbeing. We appreciate your service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Trudy K. Overlin".

Trudy K. Overlin, Chair  
Benton County Event Center and Fair Grounds, Fair Board

Cc:  
Benton County FB and ECFG Staff