

Support HB 3173

I have been involved in Tillamook County 4-H since 2005 and as a result of that, I have spent a lot of time at our county fairgrounds. Every year, the fairgrounds has allowed our 4-Hers and FFA students access to the grounds throughout the year as they participate in a variety of educational programs as well as preparation for their Fair experience. That fair experience every year is the culmination of their 4-H Project – and not only happens at the county fair, but also the opportunity to participate at the State Fair.

Not only was I active in my own children's 4-H years, but I am also still actively involved in the Tillamook County Fair because of the support that the management gives to our 4-H, FFA and JLAC Programs. The amount of collaboration between these organizations made it possible for the youth in our community to participate in a virtual 2020 Fair and to show their animals and participate in the JLAC Auction despite the challenges we faced due to the COVID pandemic.

As with many fairgrounds across the state, Tillamook County Fairgrounds has been a safe place when our communities needed them the most. Throughout the pandemic, our local wildfire experience [as well as surrounding counties], flooding, and now vaccination efforts, our fairgrounds have been transformed overnight into testing centers, makeshift hospitals, shelter for thousands of people and animals, and now mass vaccination clinics.

It is no surprise that the effects of the COVID pandemic closures have left our fairgrounds financially strapped and ineligible for most federal COVID relief funding. HB 3173 will help eliminate an old funding cap put in place years ago and provide an additional investment of approximately \$165,000 per county per year. The bill also funds a much-needed capital infrastructure study so that we can make sure fairgrounds are ready for events and more importantly, emergency disaster response.

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