

April 13, 2021

**Increase Regional Food Security and Rural Economic Development by Investing in Expanding Meat Processing Capacity through HB 2785A**

Dear Co-Chairs Johnson, Steiner Hayward and Rayfield and Members of the Committee:

My name is William N. Wise and I represent the Oregon Beef Council as their Chief Executive Officer. We receive assessments from all cattle produced in Oregon and use these funds to conduct marketing, research, and other projects to benefit Oregon cattle ranchers.

**Oregon 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**, a one-time ask which would establish a \$10 million grant program to fund expansion, upgrades, and technical and other necessities, such as equipment, like programs in other states have already piloted during the pandemic. 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.

Between the outreach that ODA, OSU's NMPAN (Niche Meat Processors Assistance Network) and Friends of Family Farmers have done since the State Meat Inspection Program was authorized through HB 4206 last June, it is safe to say there are between 4-7 projects ready for

funding. These potentially include locations in Bandon, Tillamook, Sweethome, Baker City, and North Powder.

Having a successful State Meat Inspection program is important to me because this could add significant new options that would give Oregon cattle producers more options for marketing their beef. Limited options have been discussed in several of our Oregon Beef Council meetings and this program could go a long way in providing solutions. The impacts of a lack of processing capacity in Oregon was evident during the Covid-19 related disruptions in the beef supply chain. This is not good for Oregon consumers, nor for Oregon beef producers. This program could help provide regional food system security that would benefit all Oregonians.

Thank you for your attention to these comments.

Sincerely,



William N. Wise  
Chief Executive Officer  
Oregon Beef Council