



Sunday, April 25, 2021

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

My name is Marcus Hinz and I am the Executive Director of the Oregon Coast Visitors Association. Our agency is appointed by the Oregon Tourism Commission to serve as the Regional Destination Management Organization for Oregon Coast's tourism region.

Dean Runyan and Associates estimate that visitors spend \$327,000,000 of new money each year in Clatsop and Tillamook on food services and food stores; and \$792,900,000 in total for at the Oregon Coast. Needless to say, restaurants, food services and food stores comprise a substantial number of businesses in our coastal tourism economy and a safe reliable supply of meat is a critical part of this food value chain.

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.

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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.

Please consider this thoughtful, calculated and economically measured approach to invest in our food security, community resilience and economic prosperity.

Respectfully,



Marucs Hinz, Executive Director
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