

January 24, 2023

To the Oregon House Committee on Economic Development:

As a Community Connector who has worked on multiple Food Security and Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion collaborative efforts on the Oregon Coast, I am writing to support HB2909. This bill is ideal for Oregon's food security; the availability of local seafood for our residents; and especially the Oregon Coast's economy.

Currently, 90 percent of the Oregon Coast's seafood bounty is being exported and replaced with imported products. This is bad for our local economies, bad for our environment, and has a profound negative impact on the quality of food available to Oregonians. Oregon loses an estimated \$252 million of economic value in the current paradigm. This funding would help OCVA shift the model in a meaningful way. Retaining 10 percent more of Oregon's local catch for processing and serving in the state would generate an estimated \$90 million in economic value from those products to the Oregon Coast.

Over the past four years, I have participated as a volunteer, restaurant employee, municipal employee, and now as an Economic Development Alliance of Lincoln County (EDALC) employee alongside Oregon Coast Visitors Association's food systems efforts. OCVA has built trust, understanding, and collective capacity between small businesses that are struggling with narrow profit margins. These include fisherfolk, aquaculturists, and rural community members including historically under-reached audiences. The foundation, momentum, and network that OCVA has already built around the [Oregon Ocean Cluster Initiative](#) to make Oregon-landed Seafood products accessible and affordable to Oregon Coast businesses and community members are too important to drop mid-stream. In addition, the pandemic, global supply-chain issues, and potential for long-term isolation after a seismic Cascadia event all have made local food systems work paramount to the sustainability and resiliency of our coastal communities. Increasing the amount of Oregon-landed seafood available on the coast also will lessen the carbon footprint of the current import/export system that takes our valuable seafood elsewhere and imports lesser-quality products from less-regulated seafood markets worldwide.

Healthy, sustainable, and bountiful protein sources are landed on the Oregon coast, and this bill will continue moving the dial forward on building collective capacity in our rural coastal communities to access and benefit from that bounty. OCVA has already identified many of the barriers that keep Oregon-landed seafood from staying on the Oregon Coast. OCVA has begun multiple efforts to address and mitigate these barriers. Please support HB2909 to allow this momentum to continue to improve the economic, environmental, and community health of our rural Oregon Coast communities.

Gratefully,

Leslie Palotas (she/her/hers)

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