

Submitter: Matthew Lightner

On Behalf Of: OCVA HB 2909

Committee: House Committee On Economic Development and Small Business

Measure: HB2909

To Whom it may concern,

Hello, my name is Matthew Lightner. I am a chef and business owner in Oregon. In my years of studying abroad and having many successful restaurants in Oregon, California and New York City, I have dedicated my life and career to going directly to the source. This simple concept has been an overwhelming obstacle. The issues are both regulatory and economic.

Due to these factors, it is difficult for small-scale buyers to get consistent product they need to provide local seafood in our local restaurants. A commercial blockade and inaccessibility to infrastructure has been paralyzing to our food industry, and especially in our local fisheries. The current system rewards a small handful of large buyers. In our global economy, there is a place for larger buyers and systems. But when one of our local fishers comes in off the wild Pacific ocean, they are often too tired and spread too thin to sell portions of their harvest to multiple buyers to get more value or margin from their limited catch. It's easier -- understandably -- to sell to one large buyer rather and go home to get some rest for their next trip out to sea. Permitting also works so that it often is necessary, and is certainly easier, to offload an entire boat in one location. As a result of all of these, and other factors, 90 percent of the seafood sold on the Oregon Coast isn't from the Oregon Coast.

In my experience, there are many strong and passionate individuals that lack the deep network and systemic approach that puts their needs first that match with sustainability and regeneration efforts that must happen now. HB 2909 will help overcome some of the obstacles that smaller buyers and producers face. It will help them get access to shared resources that give them -- as a group of buyers -- the infrastructure, tools and services necessary for them to compete. Then we will be able to see more local Oregon seafood in local restaurants.

There are very few People who can and have sacrificed all that it takes to turn small initiatives into large outcomes. Their voices need to be heard. Kristen at Blue Siren has the network,

passion, smarts and ethos to help build a better future. She also works with the Oregon Coast Visitors Association to find ways to knock down these supply chain issues. The time is now to make the right decisions. Our producers are more important than ever and our locally caught and harvested products have to be cared for better. I could not have a higher recommendation..
Warm regards,
Matthew