



January 24, 2023

To the Oregon House Committee on Economic Development:

I am writing to voice our organization's strong support for House Bill 2909. Our regional economic development organization operates across all of Lincoln County, and the Oregon Coast Visitors Association's (OCVA) work to support coastal fishing food systems (called the Ocean Cluster Initiative) is an essential effort to help uplift our local and regional economy. It also dovetails very well, but does not overlap, with our current work to grow the larger Oregon coastal Blue Economy.

We know OCVA will continue to be effective at implementing this work because of their extensive relationships built through previous efforts with the coastal restaurant industry, marketing community food trails and developing agritourism experiences.

As fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, we have watched our food services and food producer community experience drastic effects as supply chain challenges, needed workforce that was seemingly impossible to attract and customers drastically changing their purchasing patterns. External pressures forced pivot upon pivot to their business models, and it will take months or years to fully understand the impact and to fully recover.

OCVA's current work (funded by a USDA grant that we also supported) has laid the groundwork to create a vibrant locally-sourced seafood system. Creating access to facilities for processing, storing, and cooking seafood is essential to support the local seafood industry and provide local seafood in our restaurants. But there is still much work to be done.

As an essential part of the economic development community supporting the food service and food producer sectors as well as Oregon's Blue Economy, I know that many businesses have been affected by COVID-19 pandemic in very similar ways and have very similar recovery needs. HB2909 will allow OCVA's continued excellent work developing our regional seafood cluster. I enthusiastically support HB2909 and I hope our Oregon Legislature will do the same.

Cordially,

Paul Schuytema, Executive Director
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