



Friends of Family Farmers ♦ PO Box 751 ♦ Junction City, OR 97448

503-581-7124 ♦ [www.FriendsofFamilyFarmers.org](http://www.FriendsofFamilyFarmers.org)

Dear Chair Helm, Vice-chairs Hartman and Owens, and members of the committee;

My name is Alice Morrison and I am writing today as the Co-Director of Friends of Family Farmers (FoFF) to express our support of HB 2907.

FoFF has over 1,600 farmers and thousands more consumers in our networks. We identified the meat processing bottleneck in our state over a decade ago and during the pandemic, this problem only worsened. We were proud to support the authorization by the legislature of the state meat inspection program in 2020 and applaud the work at ODA to get that program approved by the USDA. This represents a huge opportunity for Oregon to step up to support its farmers, big and small, and put more Oregon-raised food onto Oregon families' tables.

We were also proud to be a part of the coalition that helped to pass the initial \$2M investment into this grant fund in 2021 and have our staff participate in the working group and committee to distribute the funds in 2022. We echo the concerns raised by others in the hearing that although there was only \$2M available and a relatively short turnaround on the funding application, \$14M in requests (representing over \$35M in matched investment) were requested through this process. This is only the beginning of solving this problem and we urge the committee to regard this \$10M as an essential next step (not the final solution) to this problem.

In addition to those in our general membership, FoFF's program The Oregon Pasture Network<sup>1</sup> is a community of practice for pasture based agriculture boasting a formal membership of 82 farms and over 9,000 acres in production. The farmers we represent are reporting 6-12 month appointment wait times at inspected facilities around the state. This is for those who have existing relationships with processors. The current system does not have capacity for new farmers to join the ranks of Oregon's farmers and feed their communities. This has limited the options of many farmers who are entering the industry to only selling live animal shares of their herd because custom exempt slaughter is the only option available to them. Selling by the cut, both in retail and direct to consumer settings like farmers markets, is more accessible to the average customer, opens many more sales channels and provides a better price per pound for the farmer. All these benefits are available to farmers when they have access to the necessary slaughter and processing facilities.

There is also a lack of small producer friendly and specialty facilities. Oregon has a thriving community of small producers who produce some of the best meat in the country and sell exclusively into their community food systems. There is a customer base in Oregon that expects and demands high standards of environmental care, animal welfare and local consideration when choosing a farm to buy meat from. The small farmers of Oregon rise up to meet that call and seek out certifications to meet this demand. This in some cases requires specialty

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<sup>1</sup> [www.oregonpasturenetwork.org](http://www.oregonpasturenetwork.org)

processing facilities that are in short supply. Our hope is that the money disbursed from this grant fund will not only increase geographic diversity in the processing options available, but also create more opportunities for Certified Organic<sup>2</sup>, Certified Animal Welfare Approved<sup>3</sup>, and Halal slaughter<sup>4</sup> facilities to be built in our state. These markets for meat enable a producer to get a value premium for their product and charge what the product is worth outside of the “price taker” commodity system. The expansion of meat processing infrastructure in Oregon is an opportunity to set up a system where there are opportunities for small and specialty producers in addition to access for traditional farmers and ranchers.

FoFF supports the expansion of meat processing capacity in Oregon and is excited for the developments that will come from the infrastructure investment in HB 2907. We urge the committee to support this bill and look forward to remaining part of the stakeholder and rulemaking groups that have the opportunity to determine priorities when choosing eligible projects and facilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alice Morrison".

Alice Morrison  
Co-Director  
Friends of Family Farmers

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<sup>2</sup> <https://tilth.org/help-center/slaughter-facilities/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://agreenerworld.org/certifications/animal-welfare-approved/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://halalfoundation.org/insights/halal-meat-poultry-certification/>