

Submitter: JL Wilson

On Behalf Of: Oregon Fairs Association

Committee: House Committee On Economic Development and Small Business

Measure: HB2459

Dear Chair Bynum and Members of the Committee,

The Oregon Fairs Association (OFA) strongly supports HB 2459 and thanks Rep. Nosse for his attention to this issue.

As you likely know, county fairgrounds are 'enterprise organizations.' That is, although they are publicly owned properties & facilities, they are largely responsible for generating their own revenues through their fair and expo business.

Starting with the 2020 fair season, Oregon's county fairgrounds were shut down over the course of a year due to the COVID pandemic. County fairs were cancelled. Expo business was cancelled. There was no ability for a county fairgrounds to generate revenue, yet the public demands placed on county fairgrounds intensified, particularly during the 2020 fire season and for local pandemic response.

Many of the grant programs established to assist venues and cultural organizations in dealing with the financial impacts of the COVID epidemic were of little value to fairgrounds, primarily because these programs were not available to publicly-owned facilities. HB 2459 rectifies this problem. It specifically calls out county fairgrounds as eligible entities for grant funding. It's an acknowledgment that county fairgrounds suffered significant financial loss from which some haven't recovered.

Oregon Fairs Association (OFA) supports HB 2459.