

# AOC ASSOCIATION OF OREGON COUNTIES

March 6, 2023

TO: Chair Meek and members of the Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue

FROM: Association of Oregon Counties Legislative Affairs Manager, Michael Burdick

RE: SB 451

Dear Chair Meek and Members of the Committee,

I offer this testimony on behalf of the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) which has represented Oregon's county governments since 1906.

Fairgrounds play an important role in civic life in every county across Oregon. County fairs give communities a chance to learn about and celebrate local culture, local products, and local industries, and acknowledge the arts and crafts of local makers. Fairgrounds also play an important role in education, giving young people a chance to see the workings of the systems that produce food for the community and get hands-on experience with how those critical systems work.

Fairgrounds also play an important role in emergency management and disaster mitigation, providing safe gathering places throughout Oregon. Fairgrounds are often used as staging areas for firefighters or other emergency responders during disasters, and spaces where evacuees can congregate and receive assistance and/or shelter livestock. In addition, fairgrounds provide space where large-scale public healthcare activities such as pandemic vaccination clinics can be conducted.

Without help, many counties struggle to maintain their fairgrounds facilities adequately. In the case of courthouses, where many counties also struggle to afford needed maintenance, renovation, and expansion, counties and the state engage in a partnership to help ensure needed courthouse projects can be completed. A similar partnership is needed to ensure fairgrounds throughout Oregon can be properly maintained.

We appreciate the committee taking the time to work on this important issue.

Best,

Michael Burdick  
Legislative Affairs Manager for Community Development