

March 15, 2023

Senate Committee On Labor and Business
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, Oregon

RE: Support of SB 1038 and -1 amendment

Chair Taylor and Vice-Chair Bonham and Members of the Senate Labor and Business Committee:

For the record, we are Greg and Rachel Leo. We live in the community of Butteville, in Northern Marion County. We are volunteers, enthusiastic rodeo fans and frequent visitors to many rural communities in our state.

We testify today in support of the -1 amendment to SB 1038, a bill to provide funding for Oregon Community Rodeo capital facility improvements.

In the course of doing research for this bill we have had the pleasure of meeting community rodeo organizers and volunteers from all corners of Oregon. In our effort to assemble a list of Oregon community rodeos, we have found that most of these community event venues could benefit from funding of capital improvements to rodeo facilities as specified in the details of the -1 amendment.

We are especially enthusiastic that the small communities of Warm Springs, Ukiah, and several other rural communities are restoring rodeos which are making a comeback since the pandemic.

Here are some specific examples:

- Part of the facility at the Curry County Fair Grounds in Gold Beach where the Curry County Rodeo takes place collapsed during a winter storm this January. The volunteers of this small community are working hard to fix and replace facilities to make them safe for the 2023 Rodeo and County Fair.
- The Pi-Ume-Sha Treaty Days All-Indian Rodeo in Warm Springs took a pandemic pause and never came back. Meanwhile, a group of motivated rodeo-lovers in the community formed the Warm Springs Ranch Rodeo Association and started a new rodeo last year, the Root Feast Rodeo. This association was built on the ideals of encouraging, teaching, and supporting the next generation of cowgirls and cowboys. This winter, they are replacing rotting wood in the old bleachers.

- The Camus Prairie Cowboy Convention is staging the Ukiah Rodeo comeback and in 2021 built their arena on the 100th anniversary of their founding in 1921. This community of 265 in the ‘Heart of the Blue Mountains’ is in the process of making further improvements in their rodeo facility.

In all, we have counted 62 Oregon community rodeos that we know of that could qualify and apply for capital facility improvement funding under the terms of this bill. No doubt there are others that will come forward once the Oregon Community Rodeo grant facilities program is established.

The language of the -1 amendment is very specific in how the funds are to be used and puts safeguards in place to ensure the funds are used according to legislative intent. I applaud Senator Hansell and the Legislative Counsel for the detailed guidelines which will efficiently and fairly allocate these needed funds to where they can do the most good.

This is a thoughtful bill will ensure that this hard-working investment in rural Oregon will have needed resources available for the updating of physical rodeo arenas to improve safety, fund maintenance and other improvements. This bill will bring a much needed boost to many local economies in many rural communities in our state.

It would be great to assemble and publish a comprehensive list in the Oregon Blue Book or the Travel Oregon website to list the dates, places and information contacts for Oregon Community Rodeos. Going to an authentic community rodeo is a ‘must do event’ for all Oregonians, rural and urban, to better understand our rural communities and to bring Oregonians together in the spirit of hospitality and celebration of our western traditions. We are happy to provide our community rodeo contact list to those administering this program.

The SB 1038 -1 amendment is well-crafted and deserves your support. We urge a Do Pass recommendation for this bill that supports Oregon community rodeos.

Sincerely,

Rachel and Greg Leo
Butteville, OR
(503) 804-6391
Greg@theleocompany.com