

Submitter: Rylie Stokes
On Behalf Of: Malheur county fair funding
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

Good evening. My name is Rylie Stokes. I am currently a senior and I have been showing at the Malheur County Fair since I was nine years old. There are countless aspects of the county fair that affect not only students but the community that supports them. In speaking for myself, showing livestock at the MCF helped me to find my creative voice. This is where my showing career began and my love for livestock showing developed. It was the beginning, the middle and will be the end of my 4H and FFA involvement that includes showing and expanding into leadership, public speaking, community involvement, and developing friendships by meeting different individuals.

As a homeschool student and Vale High School FFA student, fair gives me and others the opportunity to grow friendships with those in our community. Inside the ring we are polished, professional competitors, however outside of the ring, through fair, we have learned to uplift and teach each other to be better individuals. This is when younger members can be inspired by older members and more matured showman can reach out to teach and encourage those younger than them.

As young members learn to work with others and develop our animals through the junior livestock program, we are learning empathy and responsibility. It teaches us about life, industry, and the benefits of hard work. This is the beginning of what it takes for us to learn to consider others, animals, and ourselves.

Malheur County is one of the poorest counties in Oregon. Yet, we get to experience the generosity shown to us by this community. We have the opportunity to see how much our community values the youth. The support that goes into fair for our benefit. This fair is also one way many of our youth can sell their animals for monetary gains. Helping us to achieve our goals of attending trade schools and colleges in the future. My parents might not be able to afford to send me to college, however they could afford to give me an animal each year to raise and sell to put towards my future goals.

To say that the MCF is just a county fair would be selling the people of this community short. It has allowed us to build lasting bonds through working together. It has helped educate us about life and industry. It has given us the ability to learn to care about other individuals and animals and will help us to achieve our dreams. Without the inspiration and support I have received over the past nine years, there is no way I would be the same person standing here today. My hope is that we can continue providing that same opportunity for members who deserve the chance to

grow and gain experiences that will affect them for far longer than just their youth.