

Submitter: Melissa Ward

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2164

Dear Co-Chair Helm, Co-Chair Owens and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Wildfire:

My name is Melissa Ward and I am a volunteer with youth livestock organizations from Burns. I am writing today to support HB 2164 and tell you how crucial it is that we take the final steps to make the State Meat Inspection program successful. It is crucial that Oregon have the infrastructure to enable our hardworking farmers and ranchers to bring their livestock to market. The state currently has too few USDA inspected facilities to meet demand and small farms are often given 12 month wait times for appointments to get their animals processed. The State Meat Inspection Program can alleviate this bottleneck and allow more farms to thrive here, reduce their travel and processing costs, and allow small farms to meet the growing demand for local pasture raised meat.

This personally impacts me because in my volunteer role with the local Harney County Fair, we have difficulties finding processors to fill the need from the livestock auction. Especially those animals that have been donated to the local school or the Shriners Hospital, as they need to be inspected. Any efforts to support youth in agriculture, including those that ultimately produce healthy food for people, but the live animals must be trucked 2 hours away if we are lucky enough to have space at an inspected facility.

The state has already devoted so many resources and staff hours to the establishment of the State Meat Inspection Program and qualifying facilities. Do not let the program fail to meet its promises because of a lack of inspector capacity. Please support HB 2164 and fulfill the promises our state has made to its local livestock producers.

Thank you,

Melissa Ward
Local longtime volunteer with youth livestock
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