

Submitter: Krista Vegter
On Behalf Of: Jackson County Oregon meat producers
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 Krista Vegter and I am a pork producer from Ashland, Oregon, celebrating my 11th year of small scale operation this year. 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 my fellow 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 I've had the ongoing struggle for the decade I've been producing pork to find a local or at more times than not a state wide butcher source I can trust and rely on. Producing meat with the ever-changing climate, wildfires, water issues related to the climate and local feed crop options is stressful enough in production. The final phase of meat production reliability is critical to my operation. The attention and change needed for local options on processing is being addressed and I'm grateful to be a part of this change. My experience with the new state meat specialist has been a blessing. I also see that he is overworked and needs more support to sustain the demands. I am unable to expand my business beyond the current unlivable income much less pay myself. With a new and long over due need, a USDA harvest facility just opened up in southern Oregon. My 2025 plan is to team this momentum and establish a USDA cut and wrap to compliment the demand which will in turn support the local options for processing meats in southern Oregon. We critically need this bill to pass to allow the resources necessary to sustain the demand. The impact will allow my production to expand to a living wage and for the first time, I can hire employees and create employment opportunities for the community here in southern Oregon. This also means the failing and vulnerable producers I see closing down their farm productions one by one here in southern Oregon over the years, especially the last 5, can also have an opportunity to stabilize and for the first time thrive.

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 for your time and consideration,

Krista Vegter
Uproot Meats LLC
3152 Siskiyou Blvd
Ashland Oregon 97520