

Submitter: Sarah Ballini Ross

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 Sarah Ballini-Ross, and I am a farmer from Scio. I own and operate Rossallini Farms and Oregon Meat Co., where we specialize in raising 100% grass-fed beef, goat, lamb, and pasture-raised chicken and pork. I am writing today to urge your support for HB 2164, which is critical to the success of Oregon's farmers, ranchers, and local food systems.

In 2021, Oregon made a significant step forward with the creation of the State Meat Inspection Program through the Oregon Department of Agriculture. This program has been pivotal in bolstering local meat processing capacity, keeping over 80% of meat production profits within Oregon's economy and reducing reliance on out-of-state shippers, retailers, and federal processing facilities. By providing inspected meat products that meet USDA regulatory safeguards, the program allows farmers and ranchers to deliver safe, high-quality, locally produced meats directly to Oregonians.

However, despite the passage of HB 2785 and the improvements it brought to our processing infrastructure, farmers—especially those in rural and underserved communities—continue to face significant challenges. Processing delays due to the lack of inspector capacity are preventing Oregon's farms from fully realizing the benefits of this program and holding back our agricultural economy.

Investing in state meat inspectors is not just a local solution—it's a financially strategic one. Under the Federal Farm Bill, Oregon can access a 50% federal match for state-funded inspectors. For every two inspectors the state invests in, a third inspector is fully funded by federal dollars. This funding is critical to keeping pace with the expanding infrastructure created under HB 2785 and reducing the inspection backlog that has left small farms struggling to get their products to market. Without additional inspector capacity, we are leaving valuable federal resources on the table and putting Oregon farmers at a disadvantage.

For farms like mine, this issue is deeply personal. The lack of inspector capacity has meant:

- Prolonged wait times that disrupt operations and delay getting products to market.
- The stress of scheduling butcher dates over a year in advance, often

before animals are even conceived.

- Higher costs due to travel to distant facilities, which makes locally raised meat less affordable for Oregon families.

By supporting HB 2164 and approving two full-time equivalent positions (FTE) for the Oregon Department of Agriculture, we can not only resolve the current bottleneck but also secure critical federal matching dollars to expand inspector capacity over time.

This program is a win-win for Oregon: it strengthens our local economy, supports farmers and ranchers, and ensures Oregonians have access to safe, high-quality, locally produced meats. The progress we've made with the State Meat Inspection Program is too important to let fall short due to inadequate staffing. Let's fulfill the promise of this program and invest in the future of our local food system.

Thank you for your time, your service to our state, and your consideration of this vital issue.

Sincerely,

Sarah Ballini Ross  
Farmer & Owner  
Rossallini Farms & Oregon Meat Co.  
Scio, Oregon