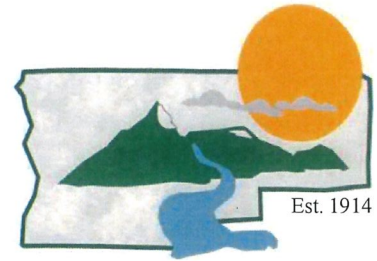


JEFFERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

66 S.E. "D" St., Suite A • Madras, Oregon 97741 • Ph: (541) 475-2449 • FAX: (541) 475-4454



January 30, 2025

Re: **Support of SB 780**

Chair Meek, Vice Chair McLane and Members of the Committee;

For the past five years, County Elected Officials and constituents across Oregon have returned to the Legislature, year after year, with the same request: to lift the outdated \$1.53 million cap on lottery funding for our County Fairgrounds and restore the 1% allocation as originally agreed upon in 1998. Each time, we've made our case, and each time we've left without a resolution.

We're here again, because this issue affects every county in Oregon—rural and urban alike. Our fairgrounds are no longer just seasonal venues for Fair Week. They are year-round, multi-purpose centers for emergency response, public health outreach, and community support. They provide critical services during wildfires, floods, and other crises, acting as evacuation centers for both people and animals and training grounds for emergency responders. They too serve in most cases, as a major Economic Engine for our Communities.

Despite their growing role as essential infrastructure, fairgrounds have been operating with funding constraints that haven't kept pace with inflation, community needs, or the evolving demands placed upon them. In 2008, during a time of economic hardship, fairgrounds across the state voluntarily offered a funding reduction to help the state navigate budget shortfalls. That was a good-faith gesture, with a commitment from the Legislature to lift the cap when the state's fiscal health improved.

It's now 2025, and Oregon's financial landscape has stabilized and grown—but the cap remains in place. Senate Bill 780 presents a simple, responsible solution: eliminate the outdated cap and reinstate the 1% allocation of lottery funds. This change will have no impact on other statutorily dedicated lottery-funded programs, and it fulfills a promise made to counties more than a decade ago.

Let me be clear: If this Legislature takes action now, there will be no need for us to come back and ask for more. This is not about special treatment—it's about fair treatment and ensuring our counties can meet the needs of the people they serve.

Oregon's county fairgrounds have always stepped up when the state and its communities needed them. It's time for the state to do the same. I respectfully urge you to pass SB 780 and ensure that our fairground facilities have the resources they need to restore themselves and continue being the backbone of community resilience across all 36 counties.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Kelly Simmelink
Jefferson Co. Commissioner