

## Testimony to Senate Finance & Revenue Committee – SB 780

Chair Meek and Members of the Committee –

My name is Geoff Hinds. I'm the Director of the Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center and also the President of the Oregon Fairs Association, which represents all 36 of the County Fairs, the State Fair, and small businesses around the state and region that work with and support fairs and fairgrounds.

I'm here to voice OFA's support for Senate Bill 780 and to thank Senator Nash and the many other supporters of this bill.

Our fairgrounds are not just used one week a year for our annual county fairs and the state fair. They are used year round as economic, social, education, and cultural hubs in each of our communities. They have also been used much more frequently as emergency and disaster preparedness and response facilities.

While our fairgrounds have been long time partners to the state, our counties, and other local emergency management and response agencies, our work was particularly highlighted in 2020 and 2021 during the pandemic and wildfires. Our fairgrounds were used as testing centers and vaccine clinics as well as emergency shelters for thousands of people and animals during wildfires.

Just in the past year, our county fairgrounds and the state fairgrounds have been utilized for emergency preparedness and response. Some examples include:

- Jefferson County, which has become a regional hub for emergency agencies and took in animals during wildfires in the area in August
- Wasco County has been a cold weather shelter and was also an emergency relief facility during wildfires until their most recent wildfire which also came near the fairgrounds
- Morrow County was used for refilling water for helicopter crews battling nearby fires
- Clackamas County was a regional facility for wildfire crews
- Tillamook County was a relief center during flooding and evacuation efforts
- Washington County was a relief center during wildfires for people and animals

Our fairgrounds are honored to continue providing this service to our communities and to the state, but with continual usage comes continual need for health and safety repairs to our infrastructure.

Thank you to you and your colleagues, some investments have been made in fairground infrastructure in the past few years and we have been able to tackle some smaller projects with that funding. However, deteriorating buildings and equipping fairgrounds with emergency equipment comes at a larger cost and we hope to continue partnering with the state to fund these issues.

Senate Bill 780 will help us begin to restore stable funding to our fairgrounds so that we can meet the needs of our communities.

Please join the OFA in supporting Senate Bill 780. Thank you very much.