

<b>Date:</b>	<b>February 4th, 2025</b>
<b>To:</b>	Chair Tran, Vice Chairs Grayber and Lewis, and Members of the House Emergency Management, General Government and Veterans Committee
<b>From:</b>	Association of Oregon Counties Legislative Affairs Manager, Tim Dooley
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Support – HB 2136</b>

Chair Tran, Vice Chairs Grayber and Lewis, and Members of the House Emergency Management, General Government and Veterans Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HB 2136. For the record, my name is Tim Dooley, and I am a Legislative Affairs Manager offering testimony on behalf of the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC). AOC is a non-partisan member organization that advocates on issues that unite all county governing bodies and have an impact on county functions, governance, budgets, and services.

County fairgrounds have taken on a new and unexpected role over the last several years as wildfires continue to set records for acres burned and communities impacted by these disasters. Fairgrounds have become places of refuge for residents and their livestock. But while a fairground may be designed to have high traffic during fair season, they often lack substantial infrastructure such as water, sewer, power, and internet access for hundreds or thousands of evacuees for days or weeks. Fairgrounds serve a unique niche in county emergency planning as they are one of the few, if any, areas under county control that can be quickly repurposed in the event of an emergency.

Fairgrounds often also serve as staging areas for emergency responders during disasters, but a lack of modern infrastructure prohibits these areas from being as useful as possible. Counties struggle to maintain fairgrounds to their current state and are unable to make substantial investments in infrastructure to use these areas for emergency evacuation or operations sites. Some counties even operate fairgrounds without onsite water or sewer systems.

HB 2136 creates a \$20 million grant program within the Oregon Department of Emergency Management (OEM) to begin the process of funding this important infrastructure work to make our communities more ready and resilient in the face of disasters. Improving fairground infrastructure would also provide economic development opportunities for counties by increasing the capacity of the fairground to host larger events year-round.

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AOC supports HB 2136 and its investment in our emergency management system at the county level. Counties are the local governments mandated by statute to manage the emergency services system, and we appreciate the partnership with the state on continually developing our system capabilities.

Thank you for your time on this important matter.

Best,

Tim Dooley  
Legislative Affairs Manager for Public Safety