

February 6, 2025

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

From: University of Oregon's Institute for Resilient Organizations, Communities, and Environments Director, Andre Le Duc

Subject: Support – HB 2136

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. My name is Andre Le Duc, and I am the Chief Resilience Officer and Director of the Institute for Resilient Organizations, Communities, and Environments (IROCE) at the University of Oregon. IROCE's mission is to cultivate collaborative, trust-based learning environments for applied and interdisciplinary research teams to address some of the most significant risks facing organizations, communities, and the environment.

In 2022, we supported Lane County's State Homeland Security Project-Lane County Expo and Fairgrounds to improve facilities for community emergencies. In recent years, county fairgrounds have taken on new roles, serving as shelters for large-scale events due to wildfires. Fairgrounds have become a refuge for residents and their livestock. Although fairgrounds are designed to accommodate large crowds for short periods, they often lack essential infrastructure, such as water, sewage systems, electricity, and internet access, to support hundreds or even thousands of evacuees for days or weeks.

Fairgrounds are essential in county emergency planning because they are among the few sites under county control that can be quickly repurposed during emergencies. They often serve as staging areas for emergency responders during disasters. However, outdated infrastructure limits their effectiveness. Counties face challenges in maintaining fairgrounds in their current condition and often struggle to invest significantly in updating the infrastructure needed to use these areas for emergency evacuation or operations.

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**Institute for Resilient
Organizations, Communities,
and Environments**

HB 2136 creates a \$20 million grant program within the Oregon Department of Emergency Management (OEM) to begin funding this important infrastructure work to make our communities disaster-resilient and future-ready. The Institute for Resilient Organizations, Communities, and Environments at the University of Oregon supports HB 2136 and its investment in our emergency management system at the county level. Thank you for your time on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'André Le Duc'.

André Le Duc

*Vice President and Chief Resilience Officer, University of Oregon Safety and Risk Services, and
Director, Institute for Resilient Organizations, Communities, and Environments*

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