

Submitter: Whitney Jacques
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and
Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB809

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash and members of the committee:

My name is Whitney Jacques and I am a small farmer in Multnomah County. I have been a small scale livestock producer for many years and support SB 809.

Our livestock producers have been facing a steep problem here in Oregon. Meat processing bottlenecks have been a problem in Oregon and across the country for decades and processing remains one of the most consolidated industries in the country. According to the Open Markets Institutes recent study, more than half of the poultry processing capacity in the country is controlled by just 4 companies (Tyson, JBS, Perdue, and Sanderson) and according to the National Chicken Council in 2019, 9 out of 10 chickens raised in the US are raised in a contract farming system. All this comes together to place an economic incentive on processors to work with these large companies instead of independent growers not funnelling their product into aggregated supply chains. This has led to reports of 12 month wait times for processing dates from our farmers, termination of small farm relationships with larger plants, and lost sales and delayed growth for our small farms. The demand is there, but we need more legal pathways for our farmers to get their chickens to market.

This is where the State Meat inspection Program and the expansion in SB 809 come in. The State Meat Inspection program allows farms more choices in processing, and all meat processed in these facilities must be sold within Oregon. This creates an incentive for businesses to work with local, independent producers and create better supply chains for our community food systems. It also provides more flexibility than the current ODA poultry inspection and allows for more farm businesses to scale up and enter new markets. This is a step in the right direction and we applaud the work of ODA in correcting this exclusion from the program. Our producers are very excited about the expansion and we look forward to the greater availability of local food it can bring.