



Written Testimony in Support of House Bill 2304

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I write today in strong support of House Bill 2304, which takes decisive action to strengthen Oregon's county fairgrounds by increasing financial support, prioritizing long-term infrastructure planning, and designating the Oregon State Fair and Exposition Center as a regional emergency and evacuee center. This legislation is vital to ensuring that fairgrounds remain not only centers of celebration but also lifelines in times of crisis.

During natural disasters—such as Oregon's devastating wildfires and extreme weather events—fairgrounds become indispensable. They provide shelter for displaced families, staging areas for emergency response teams, and temporary refuge for livestock and pets. However, many fairgrounds struggle with outdated infrastructure, limiting their ability to respond effectively when communities need them most. HB 2304 removes the restrictive cap on lottery proceeds allocated to the County Fair Account, allowing fairgrounds to receive the financial support necessary to maintain and improve these critical facilities.

The bill also takes a proactive approach by requiring the Oregon Business Development Department to develop a five-year and ten-year master plan for fairground infrastructure. This forward-thinking initiative ensures that fairgrounds are equipped to meet the challenges of the future, both as cultural hubs and as emergency response centers. Furthermore, authorizing bonds to upgrade the Oregon State Fair and Exposition Center solidifies its role as a regional disaster relief facility, strengthening our state's preparedness for emergencies.

Fairgrounds are more than event spaces; they are pillars of community resilience. By investing in them, we are investing in Oregon's ability to respond to disasters and safeguard our rural and urban communities alike. I urge you to support HB 2304 to ensure that fairgrounds remain equipped to serve Oregonians in both times of celebration and times of crisis.

Sincerely,

Brian Crow, Executive Director
Clackamas County Fair and Event Center