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On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Economic Development, Small Business, and Trade

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2304

Support County & State Fair Investments for Emergency Preparedness
SB 780 / HB 2304 / HB 2136 / HB 2145 / HB 2527

In recent years, county fairgrounds and the state fair have played a critical role in emergency response. From the global pandemic to wildfire relief efforts, these facilities transformed overnight into testing centers, makeshift hospitals, evacuation shelters for thousands of people and animals, and mass vaccination clinics. Fairgrounds are more than just event spaces—they are essential emergency response hubs. Yet, their infrastructure has not kept pace with the growing health and safety needs of our communities.

Economic & Community Impact

Beyond emergency response, fairgrounds drive year-round economic growth:

- 6 million visitors annually attend county and state fairs, plus 17,000 local events, supporting hotels, restaurants, retail, and service providers.
- 600+ nonprofit organizations use fairgrounds to raise over \$10 million for charitable causes.
- Junior Livestock Auctions generate over \$12 million, funding scholarships for students pursuing careers in agriculture and food production.
- 10,000 volunteers contribute over 200,000 hours of service at local fairgrounds.
- Fairgrounds directly employ 479 workers, with a payroll exceeding \$10 million.
- A recent Oregon State University economic study found that fairgrounds contribute \$52 million in total economic output, \$28 million in value-added income, and support 867 full- and part-time jobs.

Legislative Requests

To ensure fairgrounds continue serving as vital disaster response centers, economic drivers, and cultural hubs, we urge legislators to:

Eliminate the outdated funding cap and fully fund 1% of lottery revenues for county fairgrounds, allocating 90% to county fairs and 10% to the state fairgrounds.

Invest \$20.839 million in state fairgrounds infrastructure to enhance its role as a regional emergency and evacuee center.

Fund a study and additional capital improvements for state and county fairgrounds to strengthen their ability to serve as emergency response sites and year-round community resources.

Provide \$2.5 million to the Union County Fairgrounds for critical health and safety

infrastructure, including running water and sewer system upgrades.

Fairgrounds Are Essential—Let's Invest in Their Future

By fully funding and improving Oregon's fairgrounds, we ensure stronger, more resilient communities while preserving these spaces for economic, cultural, and educational enrichment.

We urge legislators to prioritize these investments and recognize the vital role fairgrounds play in emergency preparedness, economic development, and community engagement.