



JACKSON COUNTY

Oregon

County Administration

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Oregon House of Representatives
House Committee On Economic Development, Small Business, and Trade

RE: Support of Oregon House Bill 2304 (2025)

Dear Chair Nguyen, Vice-Chairs Diehl and Isadore, and Members of the House Committee On Economic Development, Small Business, and Trade:

I am writing today on behalf of Jackson County, in strong support of Oregon House Bill (HB) 2304 (2025), which seeks 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.

Jackson County has firsthand experience with the critical role fairgrounds play in times of crisis. During the devastating Almeda and South Obenchain Fires of 2020, our fairgrounds became a crucial hub for emergency response. We provided shelter for displaced individuals and families, as well as a safe haven for livestock and pets that had nowhere else to go. The fairgrounds also served as a coordination site for response teams working tirelessly to assist those impacted by the Fires.

Beyond wildfire response, the Jackson County Fairgrounds played a key role during the COVID-19 Pandemic, serving as a large-scale vaccination clinic. This enabled thousands of Oregonians to receive essential health services in a timely and efficient manner, further proving the value of these facilities as public health and safety assets.

Despite these critical functions, many fairgrounds across Oregon—including ours—are operating with outdated infrastructure, limiting their ability to effectively respond to future emergencies. HB 2304 removes financial barriers by lifting the restrictive cap on lottery proceeds allocated to the County Fair Account, ensuring fairgrounds have the funding necessary to maintain and improve their facilities. Additionally, the Bill's requirement for a five-year and ten-year master plan will allow for proactive infrastructure planning, ensuring fairgrounds can continue to serve as both cultural and emergency response hubs.

By investing in Oregon's fairgrounds, we are investing in community resilience. These spaces are more than venues for entertainment—they are lifelines when disaster strikes. 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,

Shannon Bell

Senior Deputy County Administrator/Tax Collector