

March 4, 2025

House Committee on Economic Development, Small Business, and Trade

900 Court St. NE

Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Nguyen, Vice Chair Diehl, Vice Chair Isadore, and Committee Members:

I am writing to express my support for House Bills 2304 and 2145 as a member of the Marion County Fair Board. Supporting HB 2145 and HB 2304 ensures that fairgrounds remain equipped to serve Oregonians in both times of celebration and times of crisis.

HB 2304 and HB 2145 remove the restrictive cap on lottery proceeds allocated to the County Fair Account, thus providing fairgrounds with the financial support necessary to maintain and improve facilities, which provide critical infrastructure within communities across Oregon.

In the past few years, our county fairgrounds and the state fair stepped up when our communities needed them the most. Through the global pandemic, wildfire relief efforts, and testing and vaccination efforts, our fairgrounds were transformed overnight into testing centers, makeshift hospitals, shelter for thousands of people and animals, and mass vaccination clinics.

Fairgrounds continue to act as hubs for emergency response and resilience efforts year-round. However, our state fairgrounds and county fairgrounds infrastructure has not been able to meet the health and safety needs of our communities when we need them the most.

A recent economic study by Oregon State University estimated that fairgrounds generated an economic footprint of approximately \$52 million in output, \$28 million in value-added income, and 867 full- and part-time jobs.

We are asking for legislators to:

- Eliminate the cap established 20 years ago and fully fund 1% of lottery funds to county fairs with 90% of funds going to county fairgrounds and 10% of funds going to the state fairgrounds.
- Support an additional \$20.839 million to the state fairgrounds for infrastructure improvements as a regional emergency and evacuee center
- Fund a study and additional capital project improvements to state and county fairgrounds to ensure they can continue as resilience/disaster response, economic, social, cultural, and educational hubs in our communities.
- Support an investment of \$2.5 million to the Union County Fairgrounds for health and safety infrastructure, including running water and sewer.

I urge the committee to pass both HB 2304 and HB 2145 so that fairgrounds across the state can bring together communities, both in times of celebration and in times of crisis whilst providing critical services and promoting resilience.

Sincerely,

Dana Castano

Marion County Fair Board Member