



HARNEY COUNTY COURT

450 North Buena Vista #5, Burns, Oregon 97720

Phone: 541-573-6356 Fax: 541-573-8387

Websites: www.co.harney.or.us ♦ www.harneycounty.org

March 4, 2025

Dear Members of the Oregon Legislature,

On behalf of the Harney County Court, we are writing to express our strong support for House Bills 2304 and 2145 currently under consideration in the 2025 Regular Session. These bills address critical issues related to county fairs and the Oregon State Fair, which are of paramount importance to rural counties like ours. House Bill 2145 removes the \$1.53 million cap on lottery proceeds allocated to the County Fair Account, providing much-needed financial flexibility for our local fair. House Bill 2304 proposes the development of a master plan for county fairground capital construction and authorizes bonds to support the Oregon State Fair and Exposition Center as a regional emergency and evacuee center. We note with satisfaction the considerable public interest in HB 2304, as evidenced by the testimony submitted to the committee.

In Harney County, our annual fair is more than just an agricultural showcase; it is a vital economic engine and a cornerstone of our community's identity. It generates significant revenue for local businesses, supports jobs, and provides a platform for local artisans and entrepreneurs. Moreover, it serves as a gathering place where families come together, traditions are passed down, and the values of hard work, community spirit, and agricultural stewardship are celebrated. The fair also provides valuable educational opportunities for our youth through 4-H programs, livestock competitions, and other agricultural exhibits, inspiring the next generation of farmers, ranchers, and community leaders.

The Harney County Fairgrounds serve a multifaceted purpose in our community. Beyond hosting our annual fair, they are an essential resource for various community events and emergency response efforts. This was particularly evident during the recent wildfires when the fairgrounds were used to stage firefighters and house incident command operations. The fairgrounds provided a crucial base for approximately 90 Oregon National Guard members who were deployed to assist with wildfire response efforts, including four hand crews of 22 firefighters each. This demonstrates how imperative our fairgrounds are not only for community gatherings but also for disaster response and public safety.

We urge you to support both House Bill 2145 and House Bill 2304. These bills represent important investments in rural Oregon and will help ensure that counties like ours can continue to thrive and serve our communities effectively. The public engagement on HB 2304 underscores the widespread recognition of its importance. Flexible funding will go a long way in updating our facility, allowing us to address critical infrastructure needs

and enhance the overall experience for our community and visitors. Thank you for your consideration and your service to the people of Oregon.

Sincerely,

HARNEY COUNTY COURT



William Hart, Judge



Patty Dorroh, Commissioner



Rob Frank, Commissioner