



Clatsop County Fair and Expo



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House Committee on Economic Development, Small Business, and Trade
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support HB 2145 – Increasing Funding and Long-Term Planning for County Fairgrounds

Dear Chair Nguyen, Vice-Chairs Diehl and Isadore, and Members of the Committee,

As Fairgrounds Manager for the Clatsop County Fairgrounds, I write in support of House Bill 2145, which will provide much-needed funding stability and long-term planning for fairgrounds across Oregon.

County fairgrounds serve as economic hubs, community gathering spaces, and emergency response centers, yet they have been constrained by outdated funding limits and increasing operational costs. HB 2145 removes the outdated \$1.53 million cap on lottery allocations, ensuring that fairgrounds receive a consistent share of lottery revenues to support necessary improvements. Additionally, the bill directs the Oregon Business Development Department to develop a long-term master plan for capital construction at fairgrounds, ensuring strategic investment in these vital facilities.

Funding Fairgrounds as Economic and Cultural Hubs

The Clatsop County Fairgrounds plays a critical role in our local economy, supporting businesses, nonprofit fundraisers, and tourism, while generating revenue for hotels, restaurants, and vendors. However, fairgrounds across the state face significant infrastructure challenges that make it difficult to expand events, maintain facilities, and meet increasing demand. For years, county fairgrounds have been limited by a lottery allocation cap that does not reflect inflation, rising costs, or growing community needs.

HB 2145 ensures that fairgrounds receive a fair and sustainable share of lottery revenue, allowing for critical repairs, facility upgrades, and expanded programming to support economic growth.

Planning for Sustainable Infrastructure Improvements

Many fairgrounds, including Clatsop County's, have aging buildings, barns, restrooms, and outdated utility systems that are costly to maintain. Without proper investment, these facilities deteriorate, affecting both fair operations and year-round rentals that bring in essential revenue.

HB 2145 ensures that fairgrounds will have a structured, data-driven capital improvement plan by requiring the Oregon Business Development Department to create five- and ten-year construction plans for every county fairground. This will provide a long-term strategy for sustainable infrastructure improvements, ensuring fairgrounds remain viable assets for economic, educational, and emergency response purposes.

Managing Rising Costs and Operational Challenges

Since COVID-19, fairgrounds have experienced sharply increasing costs. Land-use restrictions can be a barrier to expansion opportunities, and staffing shortages make it difficult to operate at full capacity. These challenges also impact on the many vendors, carnival operators, and service providers who rely on fairgrounds for their businesses.

By increasing fairgrounds' access to consistent, inflation-adjusted funding, HB 2145 supports the stability of local businesses that depend on county fairs and other events held at these facilities.

Ensuring Fairgrounds Are Ready for Emergency Response

Fairgrounds often serve as emergency shelters, disaster response centers, and community relief sites. However, without modern infrastructure improvements, many facilities struggle to meet the demands of large-scale emergency situations. By creating a long-term capital investment strategy, HB 2145 sets the stage for future improvements that will enhance fairgrounds' ability to respond effectively to disasters and public health emergencies.

Immediate Action is Needed

This bill declares an emergency, making it effective immediately upon passage. Given the financial and operational challenges fairgrounds face today, this funding and long-term planning are essential to keeping fairgrounds operational, modernized, and prepared for future growth.

Conclusion

HB 2145 is a strategic investment in county fairgrounds. By removing outdated funding caps and requiring long-term infrastructure planning, this bill ensures that fairgrounds remain economic engines, community hubs, and emergency response centers for our communities for generations to come.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge your YES vote on HB 2145.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Kyle Sharpsteen
Fairgrounds Manager
Clatsop County