

Date:	March 6th, 2025
To:	Chair Nguyen, Vice Chairs Isadore and Diehl, and Members of the House Committee on Economic Development, Small Business, and Trade
From:	Association of Oregon Counties Legislative Affairs Manager, Justin Low
Subject:	Support – HB 2304

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HB 2304. For the record, my name is Justin Low, and I am a Legislative Affairs Manager offering testimony on behalf of the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC).

AOC is a non-partisan member organization that advocates on issues that unite all county governing bodies and have an impact on county functions, governance, budgets, and services.

Fairgrounds play an important role in civic life in every county across Oregon. County fairs give communities a chance to learn about local culture, local products, and local industries, and celebrate the arts and crafts of local makers. Fairs also serve an important role in education, giving individuals a chance to see the inner workings of the systems that produce food and get hands-on experience with how those critical systems work.

From an emergency management and disaster mitigation standpoint, county fairgrounds provide safe gathering places throughout Oregon. Fairgrounds are often used as staging areas for firefighters or multi-agency emergency responders during disasters, and spaces where evacuees can congregate and receive assistance and/or shelter livestock. Additionally, fairgrounds provide space where large-scale public healthcare services can take place, like vaccination clinics during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many counties, however, do not have sufficient funding to maintain their fairgrounds facilities adequately. By eliminating the funding cap placed on proceeds from the Oregon State Lottery to the County Fair Account and empowering the Oregon Business Development Department to work in partnership with counties to assess and report on fairground needs, the State can help ensure that fairgrounds throughout Oregon are properly maintained for community gatherings and prepared for critical emergency needs.

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Thank you for your time and work on this important issue.

Best,

Justin Low
Legislative Affairs Manager for Governance and Revenue