

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

My name is Bobby Levy and I am the State Representative for House District 58, which includes Umatilla, Union, and Wallowa Counties.

I am honored to submit this testimony in strong support of HB 2527, which will finally address a long-standing infrastructure challenge at the Union County Fairgrounds. As the only fairgrounds in Oregon without running water and flushing toilets, this project has been a top priority for years. We are now at a critical juncture where further delays will only drive up costs and create additional barriers to project completion.

The Union County Fairgrounds are more than just a venue for our annual county fair—they serve as a vital hub for our community. Designated as a resiliency hub in partnership with the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) and the Oregon Department of Emergency Management (ODEM), the fairgrounds are a critical lifeline during times of crisis. When wildfires, winter storms, or other emergencies arise, this hub will serve as a supply distribution center, an evacuation site, and an emergency shelter for Union County residents.

Both FEMA and the State of Oregon recognize the importance of investing in local resiliency efforts. Ensuring the fairgrounds have modern water and sewer facilities is not just about convenience—it is about preparedness, safety, and protecting our community. The current septic system is unsustainable, and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has determined that replacing it is not an option. The only viable solution is to connect to the City of La Grande's water and sewer system, but that requires significant infrastructure work, including tunneling under the Grande Ronde River or bridging over Interstate 84.

Since 2021, I have diligently worked to secure funding, but year after year we're unable to cross the finish line. And since I started working on this request, rising construction costs have pushed the original \$700,000 estimate to \$4.35 million. While we have secured partial funding from various sources, we still need \$2.5 million to complete the project. Without this investment, the fairgrounds cannot fulfill their full potential as a community resource.

I urge your support for HB 2527 to ensure that the Union County Fairgrounds can continue serving Eastern Oregon year-round—both as a gathering place for residents and as a critical emergency response center when disaster strikes. Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bobby Levy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Representative Bobby Levy
House District 58