

DATE: February 11, 2019
TO: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on General Government
FROM: Association of Oregon Counties
SUBJECT: County Fair Funding

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

This letter is to indicate the Association of Oregon Counties request for an increase in County Fair funding from the State of Oregon.

Currently, Oregon's 36 county fairs receive \$55,000 per year to support the execution of the county fair in each community. These funds play a vital role in supporting County Fair Boards around the State of Oregon in areas of maintenance, staffing, judging, ribbons, and trophies.

Oregon counties are asking for an increase of \$110,000 per county per year in funding from the State of Oregon to support County Fairs, for a total of \$165,000 per year per county. While funds did increase in the 2015-17 and 2017-19 budgets by \$180,000, for an increase of \$5,000 per county, this increase is not sufficient to support the deferred maintenance, outdated infrastructure, underpaid staff, and overburdened volunteers.

County fairs are the heart and meeting place of many communities in Oregon. They also provide learning opportunities for our youth through programs like 4H and the FFA. Children involved in 4H or FFA are more likely to stay in school, seek higher education, and contribute in a positive way to our communities.

Enhancing the county fair experience is an excellent investment in the young people of our state. In addition, exposing our youth to opportunities where they can learn how to grow food and raise animals can lead to the development of life skills that help grow confidence, independence, and compassion.

The funds contributed by the State of Oregon are matched many times over by county funds, donations, and an insurmountable amount of volunteer hours by members of the community.

We would very much appreciate the opportunity to testify before your committee on March 25, 2019.

Thank you for your consideration.