To Chairman Brad Witt
House Natural Resources Committee

cc: Greg Barretto, my representative

Support HB 2834 Wildlife Corridors

Please include my testimony into the hearing record on 3/14/2019 regarding HB 2834, the wildlife corridors bill.

I support legislation that encourages Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to continue their research and management of wildlife corridors, especially in regard to working with Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to create crossings for wildlife across busy highways in our state.

Having worked for ODFW for over 35 years in wildlife research (recently retired) I feel I am uniquely qualified to provide testimony as to the effects of roads and infrastructure on terrestrial wildlife. Fish have been the focus of efforts to remove barriers to migration for most of the last 30 years, but recently barriers to terrestrial wildlife migration has been intensively researched by ODFW. My team analyzed data from 6 years of mule deer movements and deer-vehicle collisions in south central Oregon (attached). A map of the result of that study is also attached to my testimony. ODOT was a vital partner in the mule deer study.

While mule deer are threatened by increased traffic on Highway 97, which effectively cuts off their access to winter range from their summer habitats in the Cascade foothills, other wildlife could benefit from crossing structures built for mule deer. Cameras installed at a crossing near Lava Butte having documented elk, bears, cougars, and other smaller wildlife using the underpass.

It is a big deal to develop crossings on state highways because it is expensive. But the benefits to both wildlife and humans in reduced deer/vehicle collisions is something that cannot really have too high of a price tag, in my opinion. The overwhelming success of nearly every wildlife crossing that is built is testimony itself.

Please pass the bill as amended to require ODFW to develop an action plan for wildlife connectivity in Oregon.

Sincerely,

Priscilla K. Coe