



To,

Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation

900 Court Street, Salem OR

Date: 03.31.2021

Re: Testimony in Support of SB 841 to restore funding to Department of Justice's Environmental and Cultural Resources Enforcement Unit

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher and Members of the Committee

On behalf of our organizations *Center for Biological Diversity, WildEarth Guardians, Audubon Society of Portland, Northeast Oregon Ecosystems, Oregon Wild, Cascadia Wildlands, Western Environmental Law Center and Humane Voters Oregon* we are submitting this written testimony **in support of SB 841**, which aims to restore funding to Department of Justice's (DoJ) Environmental and Cultural Resources Enforcement Unit (ECREU).

As conservation organizations, we are very concerned that Oregon currently does not have any funding to support dedicated prosecutors who would enforce environmental laws and regulations in the state. Oregon is rich in ecologically important biodiversity and natural resources — from our rivers and lakes to our pristine forests and the wildlife that depend on them. These resources provide a wide range of benefits to Oregonians — livelihoods, health and well-being, and mitigating climate change impacts, to name a

few. It is, therefore, imperative that our state has the capacity and the resources to protect these resources.

Without dedicated prosecutors, DoJ will not be able to prioritize environmental crimes cases and we will inevitably see a backlog of cases that might never make it to court. We also fear that without enforcement of critical environmental regulations, the deterrent effect of these laws and regulations is lessened and our state may witness a spike in environmental crimes such as wildlife poaching and illegal wildlife trade.

ECREU represents the interests of majority of Oregonians that care about our wildlife and wild spaces. Without enforcement and prosecution, our environmental policies would be woefully ineffective. When the program was decoupled from its funding source, it was directed toward General Fund moneys. We are simply asking that directive be met and ECREU does not go without funding.

We urge you to support SB 841 and restore funding to ECREU so that our natural resources are conserved and sustainably managed for the present and future generations of Oregonians.

Thanking you

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