

SB 696 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Judiciary

Action Date: 03/06/23

Action: Do pass and refer to Ways and Means by prior reference.

Vote: 3-1-1-0

Yeas: 3 - Gelser Blouin, Manning Jr, Prozanski

Nays: 1 - Linthicum

Exc: 1 - Thatcher

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: Revenue impact issued

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Meeting Dates: 2/22, 3/6

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Appropriates General Fund moneys for a statewide animal abuse and neglect prosecutor in the Oregon Department of Justice.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Expertise required for animal abuse and neglect investigations and prosecutions
- Pretrial forfeiture statute for animal-cruelty cases
- Department of Justice would provide additional logistical support
- Future funding from nonprofit organization is uncertain
- Correlation between animal abuse and crimes against persons

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Humane special agents are peace officers commissioned by the Superintendent of the Oregon State Police, at the request of a humane investigation agency. They are vested with authority to investigate and enforce animal welfare laws, including prohibitions on animal abuse and neglect. The special agents are employees of the humane investigation agencies, who are responsible for the agents' salaries.

There is one prosecutor in Oregon dedicated to animal abuse and neglect cases, based out of Benton County but providing assistance throughout the state. That position is currently funded by a grant from the Animal Legal Defense Fund, awarded in three-year cycles.

Senate Bill 696 funds a statewide animal-cruelty-focused attorney within the Oregon Department of Justice.