



OREGON HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

March 28, 2023

RE: Testimony supporting House Bill 2631

Chair Helm, Vice Chairs Hartman and Owens, and members of the committee :

I write supporting HB 2631, a new proposal to support our ranchers and livestock producers. While wolves don't impact my district, I support approaches that help our agricultural producers when state policies place a disproportionate burden on our farmers and ranchers.

Over the last several years, wolves have expanded their territory across Oregon. Wolves are now confirmed to live from the Snake River to the slopes of Mt. Hood and down to the California border. As their populations have grown, we see many conflicts with livestock. For cattle and sheep, this means lower weaning weights, reduced pregnancy rates, and aggressive dispositions in cattle—all of which reduce the value of herds and flocks. Of course, this also means predation – where wolves kill cattle or sheep. Sometimes these events are confirmed, and more frequently, there are no remains.

When wolves returned to Oregon nearly two decades ago, the wolf depredation compensation and financial assistance grant program was created to help offset the costs of these losses by the people who bear the burden of wolf conservation. The grant program provides money to counties to help deter conflict with livestock and cover direct costs for losses. With increasing wolf populations and predation of livestock, the fund isn't keeping up with demand.

It's time to update this fund. Other states with more established wolf populations have used a science-based approach to ensure the costs to ranchers is more accurately captured. HB 2631 provides a multiplier of 7 times the value of the lost animal for confirmed losses within areas of known wolf activity. This approach more accurately reflects the true costs of a producer's loss when dealing with wolves and doesn't unfairly require the rancher to "prove up" every possible animal killed by wolves.

The Legislature has worked to support farmers and ranchers in the past with grant programs – to offset new labor costs from ag overtime and provide grants for updating ditches, culverts, or tide gates to accommodate fish passage. This is a simple way for the state to recognize the challenges wolf conservation faces. The state's conservation goals concerning wolves provide real risks and expenses for our livestock producers. This bill has no negative impacts on wolves or on conservation efforts. This bill is a no-brainer for the agricultural community, and the wolf

advocates as it builds tolerance and resilience for wolf conservation efforts. The Legislature should pass this important policy to recognize those costs.

Please support HB 2631.

Respectfully submitted into the House record,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shelly Boshart Davis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Shelly Boshart Davis  
Oregon State Representative  
District 15