

State of Oregon/Joint Ways & Means Hearing

5-7pm, May 3, 2023. State Capitol

Hello, I'm Dr. Dan Lewer, owner of Willamette Veterinary Hospital and active **board member** for the Oregon Coast Aquarium.

I am here to **ask your support** of the Aquarium's **\$5M request** to finish gallery improvement, and **fund their new Marine Wildlife Rehabilitation Center**.

I [my team of veterinarians] am[is] **contracted to assess the Aquarium animals**, suggest treatment plans, and **supervise university interns shadowing** us in this work. I travel from Corvallis to Newport to **support their wildlife rehabilitation** efforts when needed for stranded, injured or ill marine life like endangered sea turtles, rare shorebirds and even rarer sea otters.

The Aquarium is the only one in Oregon authorized by U.S. Fish & Wildlife to treat these threatened species. Yet their capacity to do so is woefully inadequate. Most of our treatment can be done on site with **weekly vet rounds**. There is space in old warehouses where we can provide urgent care, but it's not adequate for surgery.

[Tell a personal, relatable 1-2 sentence story. Example:

Imagine coaxing a 600lb sea lion into a crate to be loaded on a rented U-Haul for transport to Corvallis before they wake up. It is traumatic for them, and they can injure themselves or undo sutures trying to get out.]

As a board member, I have been **advising the Aquarium on their proposed marine wildlife rehab** center, and have noted their **extraordinary fundraising success** with their capital campaign. COVID survival and **cost escalation have made this an even heavier lift**.

Your support of HB 5030 will not only elevate the **Aquarium's ability to attract tourists** to our state, it will **build capacity to treat endangered species like sea otters**. They were hunted to near extinction a century ago, and are almost non-existent in Oregon. Saving sea otters could **bring back the kelp beds and eel grass – vital habitats for rockfish, salmon and whales**.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of support.