



TO: House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
FROM: Portland Audubon
DATE: February 5, 2024
RE: Testimony in Support of HB 4148 – Wildlife Package

On behalf of Portland Audubon, we respectfully submit the following comments in support of HB 4148, a policy package that contains important provisions to advance wildlife conservation in Oregon. Portland Audubon (which will have a new name and brand identity on February 6th) was founded in 1902 and works statewide to advocate for Oregon’s wildlife and wild places, and to inspire all people to love and protect birds, wildlife, and the natural environment upon which life depends. Our network of supporters includes over 12,000 member households, thousands of activists, and hundreds of volunteers – as well as the many community members who have brought injured wildlife to our Wildlife Care Center or participated in our adult and youth nature education programs.

Portland Audubon supports the entirety of HB 4148, though we are particularly interested in the proposal to establish a Wildlife Coexistence Program within the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). The intent is to reduce conflicts and promote coexistence between humans and wildlife through outreach, education, training, and other work related to living with wildlife. Specifically, the program will provide funding for 5 wildlife coexistence biologists, a coexistence campaign outreach coordinator, and a coexistence/living with wildlife educational campaign.

Human population growth combined with habitat loss can lead to increased conflicts between people and wildlife. This is true in both rural and urban landscapes – particularly in the Willamette Valley where the population has grown rapidly. It’s imperative that we learn to share the landscape with wildlife and advance humane solutions to conflicts, expand resources for wildlife rehabilitation, and educate communities about how to live with wildlife. HB 4148 provides a crucial and long overdue investment in ODFW’s important work to promote coexistence across Oregon.

HB 4148 also provides much needed grants for licensed wildlife rehabilitation centers in recognition of their instrumental role in advancing coexistence. Portland Audubon’s Wildlife Care Center is the oldest wildlife hospital in Oregon and gives injured and orphaned native animals a second chance at life in the wild. Through education and advocacy, the Wildlife Care Center also serves as a resource to help our community live more harmoniously with wildlife. Under permits issued by the ODFW and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the center provides care for more than 4,000 wild animals and responds to over 10,000 wildlife-related inquiries annually.



Portland Audubon also supports the other provisions of HB 4148, which invests in equipment and capacity to improve the state’s response to zoonotic diseases (diseases that spread between animals and people), provides support to the Invasive Species Council, and boosts ongoing work to support wildlife mobility and habitat connectivity.

With respect to the provisions that address zoonotic disease, we request that you prioritize consultation with the wildlife rehabilitation community. Wildlife rehabilitators serve on the front lines of wildlife disease response and prevention and are invaluable resources as the state works to strengthen its zoonotic disease response framework. We request that the bill reflect the importance of engaging with licensed wildlife rehabilitators as this work continues and evolves.

We are thrilled to see the broad and diverse stakeholder support for this bill and respectfully request that you prioritize wildlife conservation in Oregon and support the entirety of HB 4148.

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