

# OREGON HUMANE SOCIETY

**Date:** February 7, 2024

**To:** House Committee on Judiciary

Representative Jason Kropf, Chair

Representative Tom Anderson, Vice-Chair

Representative Kim Wallan, Vice-Chair

Representative Janelle Bynum

Representative Farrah Chaichi

Representative Charlie Conrad

Representative Rick Lewis

Representative Lisa Reynolds

Representative Thuy Tran

Representative Dwayne Yunker

**From:** Sharon Harmon, President & CEO, Oregon Humane Society

**RE:** House Bill 4043

Established in 1868, the Oregon Humane Society is Oregon's largest and oldest animal welfare organization with over 50,000 supporters statewide. We are not affiliated with any local or national organization. **Today, we ask for your support of HB 4043**, a bill that would create the crime of interfering with an animal welfare investigation, strengthen existing animal welfare statutes, and closes a loophole in Oregon's post-conviction animal possession ban.

Oregon's animal neglect and animal abuse statutes are among the best in the nation at protecting animals from harm. The statutes and their penalties seek not only to prevent harm, but also to redirect the offender's behavior to prevent the suffering of more animals in the future.

Although animals are better protected in Oregon than many states, time and again members of our community plead for stronger animal protection laws and more accountability for offenders.

HB 4043 would do just that – by introducing felony level consequences for felony level behavior, and by further protecting potential animal victims from convicted offenders.

Oregon's aggravated animal *abuse* statute acknowledges the disturbing reality that some offenders commit their crimes with a state of mind that is particularly heinous, and therefore those offenders have caused greater harm to society and to their victims than lower-level offenders. In accordance with the severity of the conduct, this crime is a felony.

Our state's current animal *neglect* statutes lack such a tool to adequately address the most egregious neglectful conduct. Adding an aggravating factor to the Animal Neglect in the First Degree statute would seek to address the worst of the worst – those individuals who know their actions cause suffering, and with that knowledge, still choose to cause harm. These are not the individuals

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who made a one-time mistake, or who didn't know better; these are people who despite prior attempts at intervention, despite their basis of knowledge about animal welfare and husbandry, still choose suffering.

Voting yes on HB 4043 would send a clear message to Oregonians that you stand with them in making a different choice for the animals: a choice to better protect them by improving existing laws and a choice to hold accountable those who do them harm.

**Please vote 'yes' on HB 4043.**

For the animals,



Sharon Harmon, CAWA  
President & CEO, Oregon Humane Society  
sharon@oregonhumane.org  
(503) 416-2992