

Submitter: Hillary Williams

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2978

Co-Chair Helm and Owens, Vice-Chair McDonald, and Members of the Committee:

I strongly support HB 2978. My years (moved here from Montana in 1998) living in Central Oregon have been a time of tremendous growth. With that has come a major detriment to wildlife on our roadways. One of the reasons this area and so much of our state is appreciated, is the opportunity to keep it wild. The woods and rivers, plus varying landscapes, are home to all types of creatures. Sadly, I have gradually grown terrified to drive on our highways. The parkway in Bend is especially difficult. One big reason is chronically absent traffic enforcement meaning people driving recklessly, thus unable to stop for deer or other wild animals. However, the other reason is how nearly every single day of my commuting to work I see dead or disabled wildlife. Several times I have even seen whole groups killed together, as though semi trucks plow through them when they are unable to stop. Because we also travel all around the state, I can say that even more remote areas seem impacted by the surge in traffic. Returning home from Utah recently the drive through Eastern Oregon included countless dead deer along the highway. Since very young, I have held a deep love and appreciation for wildlife. I was born to National Park Service parents and only lived in national parks my whole life. I am not being dramatic when I tell you that seeing a deer partly alive about to be hit again and again, or a doe who is about to be killed herself because she won't leave her struck dead fawn behind, or deer who are struggling when roads are icy and no cars can stop, beautiful badgers, rabbits, bobcats, or owls, foxes, and more...cause me extreme trauma. These are some of the hardest things to make peace with in our beautiful area. The animals need a way to safely cross, and our state should fund options to keep Oregon wild, keep nature a priority. In addition, doing this will support motorist safety. I am also the mother to teenage boys who have their first experiences on our highways. I worry about them going south of town to fish or camp, and hitting elk, which can put their lives in jeopardy. It is remarkable the difference that wildlife crossings have made as we make the drive to Sunriver. These projects are showing astounding successes as well in parts of Washington.

Wildlife crossings are highly effective and Oregon needs more crossing structures. HB 2978 and an option for permanent state-level funding to support wildlife crossing initiatives will:

Improve the safety of Oregon's roadways
Remove barriers to wildlife

Make Oregon more competitive in capturing federal funding

Please build on the important progress at the state legislature over the past five years by passing HB 2978.

Sincerely,
Hillary Beth Williams