



Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the Wildlife Stewardship Bill. My name is Sally Compton, and I am the Executive Director of Think Wild, a nonprofit wildlife center in Bend.

I'd like you to imagine for a moment that you're driving down the highway at night and hear a thud, so you pull over and see that you've hit a large owl. The owl, although clearly injured, is still alive and alert. So you do what anyone would probably do in this situation - you google "owl rescue salem oregon." Except nothing comes up in Salem, and actually, the closest place you can find is either in Portland or Corvallis. So you do your best to follow the online instructions you found on Chintimini Wildlife Center's website to capture the owl. The next morning, and you're now pretty attached to this owl, you call Chintimini and talk to a nice helpful lady who sends a volunteer all the way to Salem to transport it. When you check in a month later, you learn that due to their dedicated vet team, the owl made a full recovery and was released. And you learned that it was an adult Great Grey Owl - an Oregon species of greatest concern. So as confirmed in a recent study by university of Oregon biologists - your action - just for one individual of breeding age - likely actually contributed to the conservation of great grey owls in oregon.

There's two takeaways I'd like to share about this story. 1) It's true - there is no rehab center in Salem anymore. So now the majority of the demand for wildlife services - like a hotline, education and vet care - goes to wildlife centers in entirely different cities, which are already at full capacity. And 2) if more wildlife centers close, there is no resource for that owl and the tens of thousands of other animals that get into human-wildlife conflicts annually. You just have to leave it on the side of the road.

This is why wildlife rehabilitation centers exist and why we need the grant program that will be allocated as part of this Wildlife stewardship bill. Currently, we do not receive any public funding, despite providing these essential services that the public relies on and expects. By creating and funding a grant program, HB 2980 will strengthen the partnership between the State and wildlife centers, demonstrate alignment in messaging, and very importantly - enhance financial sustainability, one of our biggest barriers.

Finally, HB 2980's allocation for three new ODFW wildlife biologists and targeted outreach will fill a critical gap. In addition to rehab, my organization, Think Wild, is a licensed Wildlife Control Operator. We got this license and started providing coexistence services, including exclusion, fencing, and conflict mitigation, because of the huge demand that we saw in central Oregon and lack of resources. In just two years, our full-time staff member and dozens of volunteers are providing hundreds of services annually - and demand keeps growing. Just last week we had a



meeting about how landholders in central Oregon are experiencing wolf depredations and want to use nonlethal strategies, but they don't know how and don't have the capacity to do it themselves. They need support from ODFW and organizations like us - which this bill would help provide.

Clearly, the need for wildlife stewardship manpower, education, and funding far exceeds the resources currently available. But this relatively small ask by HB 2980 - supported by ODFW, hunters, wildlife control operators, landholders, and rehabbers alike -will have an incredible return on investment for wildlife and the public.

Sally Compton

Executive Director, Think Wild