

Submitter: Ginger Nealon
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2980

My name is Ginger Nealon, and I work as the Rehabilitation Coordinator at the Wildlife Center of the North Coast, a nonprofit wildlife rehab hospital and educational facility located in Astoria. Every year, we treat 500-1,000 patients in our clinic, and our educational programs reach about 2,000 individuals.

WCNC fields about 1,500 hotline calls annually from the public about wildlife in distress or in conflict. We see each call as an opportunity to educate the caller about living alongside wildlife. If rehabilitation centers did not exist, these calls would be directed to ODFW, OSP, and ODOT. Each call we answer saves these state agencies time and money while we provide much-needed information to the caller to resolve the situation and ensure they interact with wildlife appropriately, according to federal and state regulations.

In addition, WCNC operates a volunteer transport network to assist in bringing in patients for care when the reporting party is unable. These transport volunteers also take patients back to the site of origin when it's time for release. Without these volunteers, who receive no compensation for their efforts, such tasks would likely fall to state agencies.

WCNC does not charge rescuers for our services to aid Oregon's wildlife. Wildlife rehabilitation facilities in Oregon currently receive no state or federal funding and are entirely reliant on grants and donations to carry out our shared mission of helping people coexist with wildlife. Supporting this bill would aid greatly in our lifesaving work.