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On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and
Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB777

This bill is a positive move in the right direction for helping producers recover some of the financial loss from wolf depredation. Compensation at FMV is a conservative reimbursement considering that the loss of a breeding animal only covers the short term value to the livestock operation. Any amount less than that is confirmation that the government doesn't comprehend the hairline margin for profit and loss upon which livestock producers operate.

Here are some trickle-down results of the loss of an animal from a herd due to wolf depredation. A breeding animal can produce several years of income for an agricultural business. Utilizing the compensation to replace that animal is undervalued considering many factors. A replacement animal won't replace what that lost cow was to the herd. Our breeding animals have many years of breeding genetics/background. Our breeding animals have known vaccination history. Our herd is a community, for lack of a better term (cows know each other and inserting a replacement isn't like replacing a tire on a vehicle). Also, the loss of that animal very often has left a PTSD memory on the rest of the cow herd. It is documented that the cows retain a memory of the experience and this can result in them not breeding back as efficiently and decreasing their milk production leading to loss of gain in their calves translating to less income at weaning and shipping. And stress increases the chances of sickness. There are so many ways that loss of an animal(s) in a herd due to depredation will manifest negative economic impact. Most importantly here, the majority of livestock producers CANNOT absorb these long-term and indirect losses! Additionally, the time, documentation, and chance of a confirmed wolf depredation is hard to achieve. Many producers will lose animals but are unable to collect final confirmation from the ODFW. Reasons might include the rancher not being able to find the animal in time. The animal wasn't identifiable for any of a number reasons. I have heard lots of reports of why the depredation wasn't confirmed. Compensation for the few that clear all of the hurdles of confirmation barely make up for the many for which the stars did not align to make a claim.

Small business food production is fast-becoming realized to be the food security that the American consumer is demanding. Supporting this sector of agricultural production is essential for Oregon's future. So, yes, move forward with this step of fair compensation. But know that the issue is not resolved. Continued examination of the issue is essential.