

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

Dear Members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire
I am testifying today to express my strong opposition to SB 777, which proposes excessive compensation multipliers—up to seven times market value—for livestock lost to wolf depredation. While supporting ranchers is important, this bill misallocates resources in a way that ultimately harms both ranchers and Oregon’s wolf population. It is unclear why a 7x multiplier is used, but the bill does not address inefficiencies or improve ways to account for increased management burdens and promote wolf recovery.

Providing compensation far beyond actual market value discourages using proven, non-lethal stewardship coexistence methods and is contentious to some. Instead of incentivizing proactive conflict prevention, SB 777 rewards depredation losses, diverting funds away from tools and strategies that help ranchers reduce conflicts in the first place. If inflated payouts rapidly deplete these funds, fewer resources will be available for ranchers actively working toward long-term solutions.

This compensation strategy fails to foster stewardship, which we all recognize is vital for the long-term flourishing of Oregon's ranching industry and the wolves. Sadly, this shortsighted approach ultimately leaves everyone involved feeling like a loser. In addition, in terms of wolf recovery, this is not the time to institute a program such as this. Oregon’s wolf recovery has stalled.

Oregon should prioritize funding for non-lethal conflict prevention rather than unsustainable, excessive payouts that encourage dependence on compensation rather than proactive solutions.

For these reasons, I urge you to oppose SB 777 and instead focus on policies that support ranchers in implementing lasting, non-lethal solutions and re-engage in conversations that

explore ways to improve the Wolf Depredation Loss Compensation Program so that it assists wolves in their recovery and fairly, but not overly, compensates ranchers and farmers for losses. Thank you for your time and consideration.