



February 28, 2025

**Sub: Testimony in opposition of SB 777 (wolf depredation compensation fund bill)**

Chair Golden, Vice Chair Nash and committee members, Cascadia Wildlands on behalf of our over 12,000 members and supporters urge you to vote against SB 777 and the companion funding bill SB 985. Cascadia Wildlands is one of the stakeholder organizations that engaged in the development of the Oregon Wolf Plan and has consistently engaged in wolf conservation and recovery since wolves naturally recolonized Oregon. We are also a founding member of the Oregon Wildlife Coalition and Pacific Wolf Coalition. We oppose SB 777 as written and the -1 amendment and SB 985. SB 777 has Oregon Conservation Network (OCN) Major Threat status as it has in previous sessions.

The Wolf Compensation Fund was designed to promote coexistence and achieve tolerance. Applying a multiplier undermines this purpose, would unnecessarily drain this fund and lead to future funding increases. Indeed, the companion funding bill SB 985 requests \$2 million dollars, more than double any previous allocation, and a 10-fold increase over the budget the program operated with for a decade.

Any multiplier creates a perverse incentive against employing best animal husbandry practices and proven effective non-lethal coexistence tools because a dead animal is worth 5-7X a living one. If this change in the program is indeed meant as a proxy for indirect loss – a concept that is not proven by science - its design is unfair because producers who are successfully coexisting (who are in the majority) could not access compensation without a death or injury.

We agree that the Wolf Compensation Fund program can be improved – a statewide livestock loss board with consistently applied criteria, providing trainings on the use of non-lethal coexistence tools funded by the program, on-the-ground confirmation of the appropriate use of those tools at the appropriate time and place, and regular meetings would address many of the complaints voiced by producers, including by expediting payments.

To be very clear, the conservation community has not and does not object to compensation for confirmed or likely wolf predations at fair market value. We do object to its application to missing livestock and/or application of a multiplier. We need to invest further in ODFW expert staff and tools to prevent conflict, not in outsized payments after the conflict has occurred to try to buy tolerance.

Cascadia Wildlands' Conservation Director participated in good faith last summer in an effort to achieve a compromise attending several meetings with members of the House Natural Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water Resources Committee at the Committee Chairs' request, but the effort fizzled after the House sponsor and the livestock industry failed to participate. We ask that the legislature take a holistic look at how to improve the program, not continue to go in circles about a deeply flawed multiplier proposal that ignores

the other challenges with the program and would lead to ballooning funding requests session after session. Please oppose SB 777 and HB 985.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bethany Cotton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bethany Cotton, J.D.  
Conservation Director  
Cascadia Wildlands  
Eugene, Oregon