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On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1076

Oregon's animal rescues have been licensed and regulated since 2019. There is a clear and ongoing shelter capacity crisis in Oregon. According to Shelter Animals Count, in 2024, 65,764 cats and dogs entered Oregon's shelter and rescue system. It is vital to find a secure and equitable financial solution for this program so that increasing licensing fees do not overburden at-capacity Oregon's rescues and shelters, which serve as a public resource in both urban and rural communities and provide lifesaving services across the state.

Conversely, Oregon breeders are not licensed, regulated, or inspected. It is time for Oregon breeders to be held accountable to standards and responsibility for animal care and welfare, disease prevention, and oversight.

When the 2019 Oregon Legislature established the Animal Rescue Entity (ARE) Program, funding was only provided for the first biennium, with continued funding for the program 'anticipated' and projected from ARE licensing fees. Unfortunately, that was a miscalculation—and as a result, the Oregon Department of Agriculture was forced to propose an increase in license fees in 2024 of nearly 500% for rescues (that assist more animals) to help offset the operational and staffing costs of the program. In other words, the more animals an organization saved—and thus the more benefit it provided to the public and the animals of Oregon—the higher its fee. Organizations were understandably and rightly concerned that they were being financially penalized the more animals they helped.

Because of tremendous opposition, the proposal by the ODA was paused, but the funding concerns remain. Conversely, breeders of dogs, cats, small animals, and birds are not licensed, regulated, or inspected in Oregon. This is a glaring omission, and breeders should equally be held accountable to standards and responsibility for animal care and welfare, disease prevention, consumer protection, and oversight, just as Oregon animal rescue entities have been since 2019.

Oregon shelters take in tens of thousands of homeless dogs and cats every year. According to Shelter Animals Count, in 2024, 65,764 cats and dogs entered Oregon's shelter and rescue system. It is vital to find a secure and equitable financial solution for this program so that increasing licensing fees do not overburden at-capacity Oregon's rescues and shelters, which serve as a public resource in both urban and rural communities and provide lifesaving services across the state.

There is a clear and ongoing shelter capacity crisis in Oregon—and it is vital to find solvency and a secure, equitable funding source for the operational costs of the Animal Rescue Entity (ARE) program so that it doesn't fall solely on the providers on the ground.