

Submitter: Rebecca Farrell  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural  
Resources, and Water  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3856

**\*\*Testimony in Opposition to HB 3856 – Personal Income Tax for ODFW Funding\*\***

My name is Rebecca Farrell and I'm an Oregon resident here to voice my opposition to HB 3856. This bill slaps a new personal income tax on every Oregonian to fund the State Department of Fish and Wildlife, while tossing a tax credit to folks who buy hunting and fishing licenses. I get the appeal—wildlife matters—but this is a flawed, unfair, and poorly timed proposal. Here's why I urge you to vote no.

First, this tax hits everyone, but the benefits don't. The bill starts with a 0.13% tax on all taxable income—adjusted yearly for inflation—and funnels it to ODFW programs. That's a broad net, dragging in low-income workers, renters, and city dwellers who might never fish, hunt, or even see a beaver. Meanwhile, the tax credit—capped at your tax liability under this bill—only rewards people who can afford licenses or tags, which run \$33 for a fishing license or over \$100 for some hunting combos. If you're a single mom in Eugene scraping by, you're paying for a tax break that elk hunters in Baker City cash in on. That's not equity; it's a regressive cash grab dressed up as conservation.

Second, it's a budget fix disguised as a noble cause. ODFW's been lean on funds—its 2023-25 budget was about \$500 million, with only 9% from the General Fund, the rest from licenses and federal bucks. HB 3856 pumps in millions—\$20 million for forest accords, \$10 million for wolf compensation, \$5 million for crab fisheries—by taxing everyone instead of rethinking priorities. Why not raise license fees, which haven't budged much since 2016, or tap timber revenues tied to those forest deals? Instead, this bill spreads the burden to folks who don't use ODFW services, letting the agency dodge hard choices while piling more on taxpayers already stretched thin—Oregon's median household income hasn't kept pace with inflation since 2020.

Third, the timing stinks. Starting in 2026, this tax lands right as we're still clawing out of economic ruts—housing costs are up 40% in five years, and folks are choosing between rent and groceries. Adding even a small income tax—say, \$50 a year for someone earning \$40,000—feels tone-deaf when 12% of Oregonians live below the poverty line. The credit's temporary, expiring in 2032, but the tax isn't, meaning we're locked into funding ODFW long after hunters and anglers lose their perk. It's a bait-and-switch that leaves us all on the hook.

Fourth, it's a bureaucratic mess waiting to happen. The bill carves out 15 specific spending buckets—34.3% to replace General Fund cuts, 19.3% for habitat, 7.2% for wildlife bridges—down to tiny slivers like 0.9% for boat ramps. That's a recipe for waste and red tape. ODFW's got to track every dollar, report back by 2030, and juggle grants for beavers and crabs while taxpayers foot the bill for audits and overhead. Why not fund this through existing channels—like the General Fund or lottery dollars—instead of inventing a new tax with its own rulebook?

Finally, it's unfair to non-outdoorsy Oregonians. I respect hunting and fishing—my uncle's a fly fisherman—but why should I, an aging home owner, who doesn't hunt, pay extra so ODFW can prop up hatcheries or pay ranchers for wolf-killed cows? The credit doesn't help me, and the programs don't either—This bill picks winners and losers based on hobbies, not need, and that's a lousy way to run a state.

HB 3856 sounds like it's for wildlife, but it's really a tax hike that punishes the many to pamper the few. It's regressive, poorly timed, and bloated with bureaucracy. Oregon can support ODFW without this gimmick—raise fees on users, not wallets on everyone. Please reject this bill and find a fairer fix. Thank you.