

## **Dear Members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire:**

My name is Sarah Spangler, and I served as the Executive Director of Chintimini Wildlife Center from 2018 through 2022. I write today **in strong support of Senate Bill 1131**. During my tenure at Chintimini Wildlife Center, I became intimately familiar with the challenges and triumphs of this work. I'd like to share a bit of that perspective with you, to underscore why SB 1131 is so important. In short, SB 1131 goes beyond a line item for a single nonprofit – it is a strategic investment in Oregon's environment, economy, and way of life.

**Investing in Chintimini Wildlife Center through SB 1131 is a powerful, community-backed step to protect Oregon's wildlife; strengthen key industries like tourism, agriculture, and hunting and fishing; and inspire future generations through hands-on conservation and education.**

Every day at Chintimini, I witnessed the resilience of Oregon's wildlife up close. I've seen a Great Horned Owl, struck by a car and barely clinging to life, regain its strength and soar back into the wild skies of the Willamette Valley. **This owl, released back in Oregon's famous wine country, may go on to live another 10-15 years, and in that time, it will provide natural (and free!) "pest control," keeping rodents and bird populations from overwhelming a vineyard's crop.** Stories like these are powerful; they stay with us. They remind us that with a little help, Oregon's wild creatures can overcome injuries, orphanhood, and trauma. They also remind of us of how interconnected we are with our region's wildlife, and the often unseen impacts they have on not just our daily lives, but on major industries. When stewarded well, our wildlife communities are resilient and impactful.

That same resilience has been required of Chintimini itself in recent years. The organization has weathered some very trying times and has persevered – but not without cost. As you've heard, during my leadership, the unexpected closure of two other nearby wildlife rehabilitation centers dramatically and rapidly expanded Chintimini's service area. Chintimini became the last operational all-species wildlife hospital for a huge swath of Oregon, including several of its most densely populated cities.

We met this challenge with determination and compassion. We stretched every resource to try to accommodate the influx of patients. At one point, the center was so full that we had to make the painful decision to temporarily pause new admissions – the first time that had happened in our 30-year history. There is shared heartbreak here, for the staff and volunteers with nothing more to offer, the person on the other of the phone left helpless to watch suffering, and for the animal meeting a painful, likely preventable death. **This is an ugly truth, but an important one. It's the reality of what an expanded service area means for a place like Chintimini: the need far exceeds the resources that this nonprofit can raise without an investment in its long-term capacity. This funding can solve that.**

Through these hardships, one thing remained abundantly clear: the community's support for Chintimini is unwavering, and in many ways, still growing. When nearby centers closed and the call went out for help, our community answered that call. Donations poured in as people learned of this plight, whether \$16.25, *all in quarters*, from a child's lemonade stand or a larger gift from a local business. Longtime supporters dug a little deeper, and new supporters emerged from our expanded service region. Equally important, volunteers showed up in force. Every week, dozens of volunteers (in some weeks nearly a hundred) are onsite to clean enclosures, prepare food for the animals, assist animal care staff, and educate the public at the nature center. Many of these volunteers and donors first come to Chintimini because they found a hurt animal and brought it in; after seeing the care provided, they felt compelled to give back. **Chintimini has always been a community-driven organization, sustained by the goodwill, passion, and generosity of Oregonians. It speaks to a fundamental truth about our state: Oregonians care deeply about wildlife and wild places.**

Oregonians treasure our natural heritage. Whether you live on the coast, in the Willamette Valley, in the high desert, or in the mountains, chances are you have a story about a meaningful encounter with wildlife. Our wildlife and wild spaces are part of who we are. And when those wild creatures are in peril, Oregonians act. I saw this firsthand when wildfires swept through our communities in recent years – destroying homes and habitat alike – one of the questions we'd hear again and again was, "What happened to the animals? How can we help them?" **People who had lost everything in the fires would still manage to bring an injured owl to us, or call the hotline about a baby squirrel they'd brought in. That is the depth of compassion and concern our citizens have. How else can you explain statistics like *two thousand patients and eleven thousand phone calls*?** Even beyond wildfires, other threats like habitat loss and climate change are putting pressure on our wildlife. Oregonians understand that helping injured and orphaned animals is not a luxury; it's a responsibility we have as stewards of this land.

SB 1131 and the funding it provides are critical. The bill represents a chance for the State of Oregon to partner with the community and bolster Chintimini's capacity to meet the growing need. **Historically, wildlife rehabilitation in Oregon has operated with virtually no government funding** – it has been sustained by community support and the sheer will of volunteers. That model becomes much harder to maintain as the scale of need increases due to circumstances beyond its control (like regional facility closures and wildfires). Senate Bill 1131 is a timely and much-needed response to ensure Chintimini can continue its lifesaving work. **But beyond simply providing relief, I want to emphasize how this funding is truly an investment – one that will pay dividends for Oregon's people, environment, and even our economy.**

Helping injured wildlife might sound on the surface like a purely compassionate, emotional endeavor – and it is compassionate – but it also has very practical benefits that extend to many aspects of Oregon life. Healthy wildlife populations and effective rehabilitation support key industries and values that Oregonians hold dear. Consider just a few examples of how a grant to Chintimini Wildlife Center yields broader returns:

- **Tourism and Outdoor Recreation:** Oregon's tourism industry thrives on our reputation for stunning natural landscapes and abundant wildlife. Visitors come to hike our trails, watch our birds, and experience the wild beauty of Oregon. Every animal saved is part of the larger tapestry that attracts tourists, fueling jobs and revenue across the state.
- **Agriculture:** Oregon's farmers and ranchers know the value of living in balance with wildlife. Birds of prey, for example, keep rodent populations in check, protecting crops and grain. Pollinators like bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, and bats are essential to our orchards, farms, and vineyards. These creatures, the focus of both education programs and rehabilitative care, are the backbone of agricultural success.
- **Hunting and Fishing:** Oregon has a proud heritage of hunting and fishing, activities are part of our cultural fabric but also contribute significantly to local economies and conservation funding. Hunters and anglers are often some of the strongest advocates for healthy wildlife populations – they know that conservation is key to the continuation of these traditions.

I urge you to see this bill not only as a grant for a nonprofit, but as an investment in the wild Oregon we all treasure. Please vote yes on SB 1131 and help Chintimini build the future that Oregon's wildlife and people deserve. Thank you for your time and for your commitment to Oregon's natural resources.

Sincerely,

Sarah Spangler  
Former Executive Director, Chintimini Wildlife Center (2018–2022)  
Salem, Oregon