

**County Commissioners**  
Danielle Bethell, Chair  
Colm Willis  
Kevin Cameron



**Chief Administrative  
Officer**  
Jan Fritz

## MARION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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April 8, 2025

Chair Representative Jason Kropf  
Vice-Chair Representative Willy Chotzen  
Vice-Chair Representative Kim Wallan  
Members of the House Committee on Judiciary

### **RE: Marion County Support for HB 3604**

Dear Chair Kropf, Vice-Chair Chotzen, Vice-Chair Wallen, and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary,

The Marion County Board of Commissioners writes in strong support of House Bill 3604, which provides critical legal protections to nonprofit animal rescue organizations that take in, care for, and place unowned or stray cats.

Currently, Marion County, alongside partners like the Oregon Humane Society, is placed in an untenable position. The legal ambiguity around possession and care of stray cats exposes organizations like the Oregon Humane Society to the risk of civil and criminal liability, even when acting in the best interest of animal welfare and public health. As a result, well-meaning nonprofits may hesitate to help vulnerable animals for fear of prosecution or litigation.

House Bill 3604 offers a common-sense and humane solution. It establishes legal defenses to the crimes of theft and animal abandonment, and it grants civil immunity to qualified animal holding agencies that follow specific procedures for intake, care, owner notification, and disposition of cats. This legal clarity empowers organizations like the Oregon Humane Society in Marion County to continue their work without fear of penalty, ensuring that stray or abandoned cats are responsibly and compassionately managed.

By providing a clear legal framework for the handling of stray or abandoned cats, House Bill 3604 also brings feline management more in line with how canines are already handled under Oregon law. This parity is long overdue. For years, local governments and nonprofit shelters have operated under inconsistent standards between species, which has led to confusion, inefficiencies, and unnecessary legal exposure. Aligning the treatment of cats and dogs under state law promotes fairness, consistency, and better outcomes for both animals and communities.

Importantly, this bill does more than support Marion County. It creates consistent standards and protections that benefit animal rescue nonprofits across Oregon, enabling them to focus on their mission of animal care and public service, rather than navigating unclear or punitive legal risks.

We commend Representative Andersen for bringing this issue forward and urge your full support for HB 3604. It is a meaningful step toward modernizing Oregon's animal welfare laws and supporting the nonprofit partners who work tirelessly to serve both animals and our communities.

Sincerely,

Three handwritten signatures in blue ink are positioned above their respective names. The first signature on the left is for Danielle Bethell, the middle one is for Colm Willis, and the one on the right is for Kevin Cameron.

Danielle Bethell  
Chair

Colm Willis  
Commissioner

Kevin Cameron  
Commissioner