

Submitter: Kristi Mellum

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB777

Dear Chairman Golden, Vice Chair Nash, and members of the Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 777. My name is Kristi Mellum, and I strongly urge you to oppose SB 777-5 to protect Oregon's wolf population and ensure responsible stewardship of public funds.

This bill threatens the stability of Oregon's Wolf Depredation Compensation and Financial Assistance Program. The proposed 5x multiplier could rapidly drain limited funds intended for compensating confirmed wolf kills at fair market value and providing non-lethal coexistence tools. While the bill increases the minimum allocation for non-lethal measures to 50%, nearly 80% of funding requests last year were already for proven non-lethal conflict reduction tools such as fencing and range riding. Ironically, SB 777-5 could decrease real investment in conflict prevention. Furthermore, over \$1.3 million was cut from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's anti-poaching budget, including funding for a proposed wolf coexistence biologist. It is irresponsible to reduce investments in conflict prevention and anti-poaching while expanding payouts under a flawed compensation system.

If SB 777-5 passes, Oregon would have one of the highest wolf compensation multipliers in the country despite no clear need. Under the current structure, 100% of confirmed and probable depredation claims have already been paid at fair market value. This bill does not address program inefficiencies or include the necessary funding for its expansion. We should invest directly in proven, science-based solutions: strengthening ODFW's wolf coexistence efforts, expanding non-lethal conflict prevention tools, and supporting anti-poaching initiatives. Rather than dramatically increasing compensation payouts, let's prioritize ethical and effective approaches to protecting both ranchers' livelihoods and Oregon's recovering wolf population.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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