

Submitter: Hava Dennenberg

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation Reinvestment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2025

Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain, Co-Vice Chairs Starr and Boshart Davis, and Members of the Committee,

I am URGING your immediate support of this common sense piece of legislation that will save countless animals from dying grueling, avoidable deaths. YOU have the power and the ability to make this happen and we are counting on you to do so. Make Oregon proud and add this project to the countless wildlife crossings that are being created throughout the country. This is an opportunity for Oregon to stand by its commitment to maintaining green landscapes and being a voice for wildlife who we share this earth with.

More specifically I am URGING your support of HB 2025 Sections 111 and 117, which establish the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) Wildlife-Vehicle Collision Reduction Fund at an annual rate of \$10 million per biennium.

Habitat loss and fragmentation are making it much more difficult for wildlife to migrate and disperse to where they need to go in order to survive. For many species in Oregon, our highways are one of the biggest challenges to their survival. As a case in point, many vulnerable wildlife species are killed in vehicle collisions every year on our roadways. This includes charismatic species like Pacific marten and wolves. It also includes important game species such as the mule deer. In fact mule deer are the most commonly hit animal in Oregon and its population has declined by over 50% in recent years. 50 PERCENT. This is unacceptable.

If you are not bought on the wildlife angle on this project, perhaps it would also be helpful to know that wildlife-vehicle collisions also take a costly toll on people. According to ODOT, there are over 7,000 collisions per year resulting in over 500 serious human injuries and four fatalities. This is the highest rate among West Coast states. Millions of dollars of damage are incurred every year from such collisions. The good news is that we know that wildlife crossings work. The Lava Butte underpass on HWY 97 in central Oregon has reduced deer collisions by over 90% since construction.

HB 2025 Sections 111 and 117 build upon past efforts of the Legislature to address the problem of the loss of wildlife connectivity and the high rate of wildlife-vehicle collisions by establishing and sustainably funding the "Wildlife-Vehicle Collision Reduction Fund." This would be a significant step in addressing the safety and environmental consequences of habitat fragmentation caused by roadways and

would position Oregon alongside Utah as the only state with annual funding for wildlife crossings.

Please strongly consider this request! We are watching your actions on this project very closely and hope you do the right thing by taking a stand for our wildlife.