



June 23, 2025

Re: Support of HB 2977 – 1% for Wildlife

Dear Senators,

My name is Sally Compton, and I am the Executive Director of Think Wild, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit wildlife hospital and conservation organization based in Bend, Oregon. I am writing in strong support of House Bill 2977 – the 1% for Wildlife initiative.

Oregon’s iconic landscapes, diverse habitats, and native wildlife are central to both our quality of life and our outdoor recreation economy. However, these natural resources are increasingly threatened by population growth, development, drought, wildfire, and invasive species. As someone working on the frontlines of conservation, I see daily how urgently Oregon’s wildlife and habitats need stronger support.

Think Wild provides veterinary care for nearly 1,000 injured and orphaned native animals each year and responds to over 5,000 wildlife-related calls through our hotline. Each summer, we experience a dramatic surge in demand—both in our wildlife hospital and field operations. This increase directly corresponds with the busy tourism season in Central and Eastern Oregon, when outdoor recreation, traffic, and human activity intensify in parks, trails, and natural areas. While tourism is vital to our economy, it also places mounting pressure on fragile ecosystems, leading to more frequent wildlife injuries, orphaning, and conflict. From vehicle collisions to displaced young animals and misguided attempts to “rescue” wildlife, these impacts strain our capacity and underscore the need for sustainable conservation funding.

In addition to responding to wildlife emergencies, Think Wild partners with landowners, local governments, and agencies year-round to restore critical habitat for native species to mitigate the issues listed above. But despite having science-backed strategies and strong collaborations in place, these efforts remain drastically underfunded—and the need continues to grow.

HB 2977 offers a modest but powerful solution: a 1.00% increase in the state transient lodging tax to generate approximately \$30 million a year for proactive, collaborative wildlife and habitat conservation. The bill would utilize an additional .25% increase in the state transient lodging tax to fund critical conservation initiatives such as the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund, Wildlife Connectivity, Anti-Poaching and Invasive Species. And, most importantly for Think Wild, HB 2977 would also sustainably invest in a Wildlife Stewardship Program, creating three wildlife coexistence positions throughout Oregon and establishing and investing in a Wildlife



Rehabilitation Grant Program - allowing organizations like ours to continue doing the important work critical to wildlife and our communities. Even with this increase, Oregon would remain among the lowest lodging tax states in the country—only Alaska and California would have lower rates.

With the average nightly hotel rate in Oregon at \$115, this would amount to just \$1.15 per night. The tax would be itemized on bills as “Recovering Oregon’s Wildlife,” clearly showing guests that their dollars are directly supporting conservation.

Importantly, this is a fair and sustainable funding source. Nearly two-thirds of overnight lodging stays are made by out-of-state visitors—meaning that the majority of funds would come from tourists, not local residents or businesses. In 2023 alone, Oregon’s travel spending reached a record-breaking \$14 billion. It’s time to ensure that tourism revenue contributes to protecting the very ecosystems and species that draw people here.

HB 2977 has broad, bipartisan support, including ODFW, the Oregon Hunters Association, private landowners, and conservation organizations. At a time when federal funding is uncertain and state agencies like ODFW face budget constraints, this bill offers a reliable path forward to safeguard Oregon’s natural heritage for future generations.

We urge you to support this opportunity to invest in Oregon’s wildlife and outdoor economy. The landscapes and species that define our state are at a tipping point—and HB 2977 is a critical step to ensure their protection and recovery.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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