

Submitter:	Heather Gibons
On Behalf Of:	Chintimini Wildlife Center
Committee:	Senate Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic:	HB2977

Chair Jama, Vice Chair Bonham, and Members of the Committee, my name is Heather Gibons, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Chintimini Wildlife Center, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit wildlife rehabilitation center located in Corvallis, in support of House Bill 2977 A, and specifically on the wildlife stewardship program that would be funded by this bill.

HB 2977 A takes important steps to educate the public and protect Oregon's native wildlife, two things that are integral to our mission as well.

Chintimini's Wildlife Hospital accepts native birds, mammals, amphibians, and reptiles for the purpose of rehabilitation and release. Our patients are split between Corvallis, Salem, Eugene, and more than 100 distinct towns in the Willamette Valley area. We see animals from rural, urban, and suburban areas, and interact with community members from those areas 365 days a year.

Right now, in the height of the busy season, we have 100 patients healing at our Wildlife Hospital, with a staff of 5 caring for all those patients, the new ones that come in daily, and all hotline calls. In 2024, we received over 11,000 calls to our wildlife hotline, providing a resource for informing the public on what to do should they encounter sick or injured wildlife. One of the things we continually educate callers and the community about is how to safely interact with wildlife.

Earlier this year, we received a call where employees held a Canada goose symptomatic of bird flu, also known as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, in a local well-known restaurant kitchen—while serving dinner to patrons—trying to help the animal, but posing a huge public health safety risk. We are here to assist sick and injured wildlife, and make sure the public stays safe when interacting with said wildlife. In this case, we were able to immediately advise the caller to get the goose outside and away from people, disinfection procedures, and on next steps.

With the increased presence of Avian Influenza, wildlife rehabilitation centers have been the frontline for many such cases, and served as an accessible resource for the public's questions. We are also frontline responders for other zoonotic diseases, such as rabies, parvo, and distemper, and are able to notify ODFW if we see trends in diseases in the community.

In the last 10 years, two rehabilitation centers have closed down near us, resulting in an expansion of our service area to be the resource the public and wildlife need. We

currently receive no state or federal funding, and subsist on the generosity of our community and private grants.

Every year we struggle to support the increasing patient numbers, and the costs of feeding, housing, and healing 172 different species of animals, and between 2,000 and 2,500 patients yearly. The funds provided by this bill help ensure we remain a frontline resource for Willamette Valley's wildlife and humans.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony and strongly urge you to support House Bill 2977 A,

Thank you for your time,

Chintimini Wildlife Center Staff