

Submitter: Joseph Vaile

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Rules

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2977

Good afternoon Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Bonham, and Members of the Committee,

This is testimony I had planned to deliver in the public hearing, but the hearing ended before I could deliver my remarks.

For the record my name is Joseph Vaile, and I am the Senior Representative of the Northwest Program at Defenders of Wildlife. I am testifying in support of HB 2977.

This bill has support from hunters, anglers, ranchers, wildlife conservationists, republicans and democrats because it is an essential fix to long standing funding issues in the Departments of Agriculture and Fish and Wildlife.

I would like to briefly discuss why Defenders of Wildlife supports the Wolf Compensation Funding and conflict reduction portion of this bill.

As an organization, we are very invested in the recovery of Oregon's wolves, and we are also very invested in the success of the Oregon Compensation Program.

Defenders of Wildlife provided compensation before the state Program was established. We were also a part of the working group that developed the Program in 2011.

Across Oregon, ranchers, conservationists, and state and federal partners are working together to reduce conflict. Important funding is provided by the wolf compensation and depredation fund.

Earlier this session, the Legislature passed a multiplier bill that will increase payments to ranchers in the event of depredation. We are concerned that without funding provided by HB 2977, SB 777 will have the effect of increasing compensation payouts while potentially cutting into the very resources that reduce conflicts in the first place.

The compensation program funds critical tools and the staff that work with producers to reduce conflicts. If you take money from that side of the program, conflicts could increase.

We also know what happens when compensation runs out — producers don't get paid, and frustration skyrockets.

HB 2977 fixes this. It secures the funding needed for both compensation and conflict prevention.

This bill won't solve every problem, but it will solve a lot of them. It puts us in a better place for producers, for agencies, and for wildlife – which is why it has bi-partisan support in the legislature and from a broad swath of Oregonians.

I urge your yes vote on HB 2977.

Thank you.