

Submitter: Devon Lawson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and
Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4034

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash, and Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Devon Lawson. I am testifying in support of HB 4034 A.

I support this bill because it corrects a fundamental error in how the state interacts with the voluntary sector. It recognizes that a community member fostering a few animals is an act of mutual aid, not a commercial enterprise requiring state surveillance.

Under the current interpretation, a kind-hearted citizen in rural Oregon who takes in a few stray dogs to help their neighbor could be subject to onerous licensing and record-keeping requirements designed for large facilities. This is government overreach. HB 4034 A establishes a common-sense threshold. 10 or more animals. If you are under that number, the state stays out of your business. This restores the right of private citizens to care for animals without needing a permit from Salem. Furthermore, moving enforcement to the Department of Agriculture (ODA) puts this issue in the hands of an agency that understands the practical realities of animal husbandry, rather than just bureaucracy.

The state relies on a vast, unpaid network of working-class volunteers to clean up the mess of the pet industry. These small "kitchen table" rescues are the safety net. When we bury them in paperwork, they quit, and animals die. This bill protects that safety net. By removing the administrative burden from the smallest entities, we ensure that resources are focused where they belong: on large-scale facilities and hoarding cases.

This bill represents a "deregulation" of paperwork, not conduct. The criminal statutes regarding animal neglect and abuse remain in full force. We are simply saying that we don't need to license a grandmother to prove she isn't a criminal. We should trust our community until there is a reason not to.

HB 4034 A acknowledges the reality of the rural periphery and respects the volunteer's labor. It gets the state out of the living room and focuses enforcement on the real problems.

I urge a "Yes" vote.

Thank you.