

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

I am writing to express my strong support for HB 4034, the proposed modification of Oregon's Animal Rescue Entity (ARE) statute. I have been actively involved in animal rescue activities since 2007, when I first began volunteering at Animal Aid, a Portland-based dog/cat rescue nonprofit. I am a past president, and am currently a member of the organization's Board of Directors, in addition to being a volunteer with cat care and the dog program. I have worked to coordinate Animal Aid's programs with several other animal welfare groups, including Fences for Fido, Portland Animal Welfare Team, Indigo Rescue, and The Pongo Fund.

I heartily supported the original creation of licensing and care standards for rescues, having seen first-hand some of the tragic situations created by a few local groups who operated well outside the boundaries of humane rescue. However, I have also seen deleterious effects of over-regulation and excessive penalties for technical violations unrelated to animal welfare. Animal Aid is comparatively small, and our staff has been able to meet the reporting requirements and avoid penalties, but there is a real cost – time spent by our Animal Care team members meeting the sometimes unnecessarily complex demands for information is time directly taken away from their ability to manage the care of animals in our custody. Streamlining and clarifying the reporting process will directly benefit our animals. In addition, handling these requirements via administrative rules rather than detailed statutes that preclude consideration of individualized/unanticipated/changing situations will facilitate the identification and resolution of problems.

I must also raise an issue that, while not a part of this bill, cannot be ignored. I know that the State is concerned about the fiscal impact of administration of the ARE statute – money is tight. In the meantime, animal breeders in our state profit off the production of large numbers of pets, often sold for thousands of dollars, including many that will end up in municipal shelters or non-profit rescues. Unlike the Animal Rescue Entities, these breeders are not burdened with the licensing rules and requirements imposed on rescues, nor are they required to contribute in any way to Oregon's animal welfare programs. I sincerely hope that in the next regular session, Oregon's legislators will address these inequities.