

Senators,

I am the Director of Cat Utopia, serving Umatilla, Morrow, and Union Counties. We are the only nonprofit in these counties actively trapping free-roaming cats and ensuring they are spayed and neutered to address the severe overpopulation crisis in our rural communities. We also socialize rescued kittens and re-home them outside the area to improve placement success.

When ARE was established, we hoped it would provide meaningful support—promoting responsible care, requiring spay/neuter prior to adoption, and addressing the root causes of overpopulation and animal welfare such as hoarding, neglect, and unregulated backyard breeding.

Instead, small volunteer-run rescues like ours have faced intense scrutiny and substantial fines that threaten our ability to continue serving the community. Cat Utopia is entirely volunteer-operated; we all work full-time jobs and dedicate personal time to this mission.

For example, ARE assessed a \$7,000 fine because privately owned cats at a foster home were allowed access in and out of their garage. There was no clear guidance regarding personal pets and no warning or opportunity to correct the issue before penalties were imposed. Minor technical issues that do not impact animal health are creating significant financial strain for rescues already operating with limited resources.

If rescues close, the animals remain—without support. Oversight should prioritize long-term solutions that reduce overpopulation and rescue intakes, including enforcement against irresponsible breeding and intervention in hoarding and neglect cases.

We hope ARE can shift toward prevention, collaboration, and solutions that reduce the number of animals entering rescues in the first place, rather than placing additional burdens on the organizations working to solve the problem.

Cindy Spiess, President/Director  
Cat Utopia