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OREGON
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SOCIETY

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Date: March 25, 2013
To: Senate Judiciary
Sen. Prozanski, Chair
From: Sharon Harmon
Executive Director, Oregon Humane Society
Re: Senate Bill 698

Established in 1868, the Oregon Humane Society is the state's largest and oldest animal welfare organization with over 50,000 supporters statewide. We are not affiliated with any local or national organization.

We urge you to vote yes on SB 698.

In the days following a major animal rescue involving large scale cruelty to a vast number of animals, the media shoots their footage from the scene or the shelter and the public is rapt, hanging on every detail. The community is outraged at the incident and grateful for Oregon's strong animal cruelty code to hold those perpetrators accountable. Often times the community is upset at how long animals are held before they can be adopted to loving homes, or how few counts a prosecutor will file, or how the sentence the defendant gets pales in comparison to the damage they inflicted. Oregon's citizens care deeply about animals and, when it comes to the caliber of their animal cruelty laws, there is a palpable drive to be the nation's trailblazers; Senate Bill 698 strengthens Oregon's vulnerable laws and fulfills Oregonian's desire to be pioneers in the field of animal protection.

Section 1: Enhances penalties for multiple animal victims, subsequent offenses, and where minors are present

In contrast to our robust animal abuse laws, animal neglect continues to be treated as the result of ignorance, poverty and situations out of one's control. Indeed, some neglect can be tied to these circumstances to some degree and our current laws appropriately deal with this behavior in most cases. However in cases involving multiple animal victims, where children stand witness to

deprivation and filth, where profit takes precedence over compassion, our neglect laws are woefully inadequate.

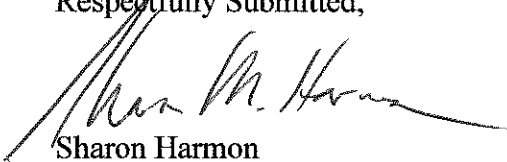
This bill will give prosecutors the tools necessary to insure that those who neglect and exploit animals in numbers receive sentencing that reflects the scope of the abuse and affords the animal victims a voice-as individuals who suffered, many for years, in unimaginable conditions. By recognizing the impact on children this bill will break the often generational path of animal cruelty.

Section 2: Possession ban to include equine and victim genus

The possession ban is one of the strongest tools that Oregon's animal cruelty code provides, however it is limited in its application to "domestic animals." Currently Oregon's definition of domestic animal excludes frequently neglected animals, such as equines, birds and rabbits. These large and unique animals have been casualties of the struggling economy and over the past year the reports of neglected horses and livestock have more than doubled. If an individual is convicted of a crime involving animals, it only follows that they would be subject to an animal possession ban that is customized to their crime. A defendant who starves his horses to death will be indifferent to a sentence that forbids him to own a cat, but strip him of his ability to acquire more equines and the statute then functions as a deterrent to equine neglect in the first place.

We urge you to vote yes on SB 698.

Respectfully Submitted,



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