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Testimony of Humane Oregon on House Bill 2732 (2017)
Senate Committee on Judiciary

May 18, 2017

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and members of the Committee:

Humane Oregon is a bi-partisan, non-profit organization formed in 2014 to help advocate for animal welfare in Oregon's political process and elections. We are a moderate but progressive animal welfare group, with board members from many different parts of Oregon's animal welfare community.

Humane Oregon supports HB 2732, which would allow an individual to rescue a pet or child from a parked motor vehicle, in limited circumstances, without civil or criminal liability.

From an animal welfare perspective, the bill would apply most obviously to the situation of a dog trapped in a hot car. We know of no statistics on the frequency of this in Oregon, but the examples seem to come up in the media at least once every couple of years.¹ In these situations, a private individual should be able to enter the vehicle, including by force, under the limited circumstances specified in the bill, including a good faith and reasonable belief of imminent danger, and prior notification of police or emergency services.

While we wholeheartedly support the bill, we have two suggestions for improvement:

First, Section 1 should be revised to clarify that not all of the actions listed in subsection (2) (including waiting with the child or animal until emergency services arrives) are required to occur "before entering the motor vehicle," as the bill now reads.

Second, we believe the bill should say what an intervener should do if law enforcement or emergency services does not respond within a reasonable time, which may be an issue, depending on the resources and priorities of local emergency responders, in the case of a rescued animal. Our suggestion is that the person be required to wait only until the driver of the vehicle returns.

Thank you for considering our comments.

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¹ See, e.g., <http://www.mailtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20140605/NEWS/406050312> (Chiloquin, 2104); <http://projects.registerguard.com/rg/news/local/34632132-196/dog-rescued-after-several-hours-in-hot-car-at-gateway-mall-woman-cited-for-animal-neglect.html.csp> (Eugene, 2016).