

Senator Manning and Committee Members-

My name is Tim Lenihan and I am here to represent The Association of Northwest Steelheaders in support of Senate Bill 320.

As the individual who originally approached the committee with this idea last legislative session, I am deeply encouraged by the committee's leadership in bringing this legislation forward during this session following an abrupt conclusion to last year's session. As you may recall this bill previously received a vote of 100% support in the Senate during last year's session. This reflects positively on the committee's hard work and upon the dedication of all Senate Members to our veteran population.

The core of this bill represents more than a recreational opportunity to our state's veterans. During the legislative process other groups were added to this bill. Angling with groups, such as The Association of Northwest Steelheaders, becomes an opportunity to reintegrate into our communities with other veterans, build a community of support for veterans, connect veterans with services as well as providing an opportunity to decompress with fellow veterans. This bill represents an opportunity for treatment and mental health building for our nation's heroes. Our focus is upon veterans and we want to work with you and the agency to make this bill more acceptable.

While working through this process, I have learned there is a mechanism in place for kids and others outlined within the first section of this bill to obtain a group license for events. The process enables local STEP Biologists with ODFW to issue permits for these events. ODFW staff have confirmed with me this process is currently meeting their needs. To avoid a redundancy of regulations, I encourage committee members to consider removing that group from this bill.

Veterans are recognized as a protected class under both federal and state law. As a DEI Change Agent, I believe in providing more opportunity for any protected or underrepresented individual, group, or family within our communities. This bill would recognize Oregon's commitment to this vital mission.

After consulting with ODFW and others, we are now proposing a simpler version of the bill. The concept is ODFW shall issue, at no cost, fishing licenses and tags to non-profit angling organizations with a mission to serve veterans and active-duty members. We believe the cost of lost revenue to ODFW will be more than offset by veterans who become more active in the angling community and purchase their own individual licenses.

We at Northwest Steelheaders look forward to working hand and hand with ODFW, with your support, in changing and making this bill successful and a valuable tool in the ongoing treatment process of veterans.