

Columbia Agility Team

May 4, 2021

Dear Chairman Golden and Committee Members:

The Columbia Agility Team (CAT) asks the committee to approve HB 2645 which will treat dog training facilities on farm property the same as horse training facilities for the purpose of the Oregon building code.

Under ORS 455.315, horse training facilities are able to operate under an exception from the state commercial building code when the facility is on a farm, occupied by 10 or fewer people at all times, not a building regulated by the State Fire Marshall, and not within a floodplain. HB 2645 will allow dog training facilities to operate under the same exemption when the same conditions are met.

We are not asking for land use laws to be changed. Oregon law already allows dog training to take place on farm properties. The added financial burdens imposed by the building codes makes dog training very difficult to set up for all but the most affluent participants; a burden the horse community does not have to experience. We are simply asking for the law to allow dog training to occur under the same conditions as horse training.

Under the current building code, if a farmer wishes to offer horse training in a farm building they do not have to make any particular improvements to the building to use it as a training facility. However, if the farmer wants to use the exact same building for dog training, the building must be improved to meet the state building codes. There is no reason why these two activities should be considered differently under the law.

Both dogs training and horse training serve similar purposes. Horses and dogs can be trained to assist with farm tasks or can be trained for sport and companion purposes. Section 1 of this bill allows these two activities which serve very similar purposes to be treated the same for building code purposes.

Our club, Columbia Agility Team, is a non-profit corporation in the Portland area that seeks to promote the sport of dog agility for dogs and people of all ages. We currently have approximately 250 members and we rent farm space from farmers for training purposes.

We have maintained excellent relationships with property owners who rent space to our club. Generally we rent portions of the property that the farmer is not using for other farming purposes. CAT helps maintain the spaces we use and have contributed to farm improvements that benefit both our club and the farmers, such as improvements to lighting, farm access roads, and building maintenance.

One difference between most dog training and horse training facilities is that at the end of training the dogs return home to live with their families and do not live on the property. Many of the farmers we have worked with are happy to allow us to use farm spaces in a way that does not require them to provide care and feeding to resident horses. As a result, the farmers we have worked with were very happy to rent their property to us, giving them the benefit of extra income without the effort it takes to manage livestock while they maintain farm operations elsewhere on the property.

The farmers we work with have horses and other livestock but chose not to use certain portions of the property for horse or livestock purposes. We have conducted our training efforts successfully and safely on properties with horses, goats, sheep, llamas and chickens. As a precaution, dogs are kept on leash unless they are in designated training or off-leash areas.

Access to dog training is highly beneficial to the community as a whole. Both rural and urban residents have dogs. Easier access to training facilities allows more dog training to take place and a well trained dog is benefit to the community. Many dogs thrive when they have a "job" which can encompass everything from herding to agility to obedience. The harder it is to find dog training options, the less likely it is for dogs to receive training that will help the dog become an enjoyable companion.

Dog training is also beneficial to the human part of the team. Dog training creates community, helps people build positive relationships with their pets, helps humans train dogs for certain tasks, and encourages physical fitness.

Again, we remind the committee that we are not requesting that the land use laws for dog training change. HB 2645 will only provide an exemption to the building code for dog training to occur in certain building that meet the exemption requirements.

Thank you to Senator Golden for hearing this bill and for you attention to this statement. We respectfully ask that you and the committee support this bill.

Sincerely,

/s/ Hannah McCausland

On Behalf of Columbia Agility Team