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TESTIMONY –
HB 2728
House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
February 9, 2021

Chair Witt and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tom Sharp. I reside in Burns, Oregon and currently serve as the President of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association. The Oregon Cattlemen's Association represents members across the state with cattle and calves in every one of Oregon's 36 counties.

First, the Oregon Cattlemen's Association is very appreciative for the courtesy and extended public testimony time provided yesterday by Chairman Witt and members of the committee concerning HB 2728.

Supporters of HB 2728 generally cited "claimed science" that the killing of coyotes as occurring in hunting contests is not a predation deterrent and only stimulates the repopulation of coyotes in greater numbers. Opposers to HB 2728 cited "on the ground" experience as cattle and sheep producers that such hunting and hunting contest activities do in fact provide a significant tool for predator management and is a needed deterrence in the targeted areas affected by coyote depredation. Neither the Supporters or Opposers who testified claimed that hunting or hunting contests provided a permanent solution for coyote predator management control. And, like public law enforcement actions taken in society and deemed necessary to intervene and stop criminal activity when it occurs, such actions too are not viewed as a permanent solution for the deterrence of all future criminal activity. It remains important that we maintain the deterrence capabilities and predator management tools effective to mitigate coyote predation in targeted areas known to be impacted. This was the message that motivated over 30 livestock ranchers with generations of "on the ground" experience took the time

and travelled great distances to come into the Harney County Courthouse yesterday to testify. And, if coyote hunting contests become banned as proposed by HB 2728, it could next be reasonably argued that a ban should also follow for existing Oregon laws permitting open season hunting for coyote predator animals without bag limitation. The fundamental difference is “scale size” rather than the sought outcome of this conducted activity.

After much consideration, Oregon Cattlemen’s Association **OPPOSES HB 2728** for the primary reasons provided below and briefly testified to yesterday during the Committee’s public hearing:

- **Coyotes are Smart and Opportunistic Predator Animals:** Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) classifies coyotes as “unprotected predator mammals” which “are, or may be destructive to agricultural crops, products, and activities” and (except for a hunting license) “has no special hunting tag requirement, no bag limits, no weapons restriction, and no closed season.” Oregon’s coyote population continues to thrive and increase in population size (estimated at over 300,000) with suitable habitat now found in almost every area of the state encompassing urban, suburban, and rural areas. Coyote predation is known by ODFW and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to be a leading cause of fawn mortality impacting Oregon’s antelope, deer, and elk calf survival rates. Likewise, coyote predation is a recognized threat to other species of both federal and state ESA protective concern such as Oregon’s Greater Sage Grouse for which coyote predation has known impact to egg and chick offspring survival rates in sensitive sage grouse lek breeding, nesting, and brood-rearing site areas. Oregon producers of cattle, sheep, goat, and horse livestock commonly experience and must remain highly vigilant in their protection efforts against the realities of economic and mortality losses as caused by coyote predation during the calving, lambing, kidding, and foaling seasons. Within Oregon’s urban and suburban areas coyotes are increasingly encountered as predators of domestic

pets and their neighborhood sightings often create public media attention and result in law enforcement or wildlife service's intervention for removal action.

- **Effective, Timely, and Affordable Predator Control is Necessary:**

Major occurrences of coyote predation typically occur during predictable times and within targeted prey opportunity locations, such as: livestock ranch locations during the spring and fall calving and lambing seasons, big game wildlife fawning and calving seasons, and for protected species like the sage-grouse during the lekking, nesting, and brood rearing seasons. Within urban and suburban areas of coyote predator conflict the public will typically call local law enforcement or engage ODFW or wildlife services for needed predator control. But in the remote and geographically large rural county areas law enforcement and wildlife services are typically not available or no longer affordable. Historically, Oregon state and local county governments have offered and paid hunters and anglers per head monetary bounties for the take and kill of designated predator species like coyotes. County governments have also budgeted at significant expense (sometimes utilizing private donations in combination with general funds) the contracted services of USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services to help address predator control and removal needs. Available government resources as needed to fund predator animal bounties or professional wildlife services are largely no longer available. Organized coyote hunting contests - such as HB 2728 seeks to ban - remain as an effective and targeted predator animal management tool at little or no public expense that can effectively be utilized in known targeted depredation areas during strategic times of the year.

- **HB 2728 Establishes Precedence for Other Consequences:** Besides the effect of eliminating a targeted and cost-effective predator animal management tool, HB 2728 introduces the possibility of other future unintended consequences. For example:

- Upon existing Oregon predator animal hunts.
- Upon existing Oregon government paid predator bounties.
- Upon existing Oregon fishing tournaments having cash prizes.

Tom Sharp, OCA President

Testimony – HB 2728

February 9, 2021

4

- Upon existing Oregon high dollar trophy hunting tag auctions (like for Bighorn Sheep).
- Upon existing Oregon big game and waterfowl hunting seasons.
- Upon concern of detrimental impact upon Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's abilities and resources necessary to manage the state's many wildlife species and management of the state's hunting and fishing programs.

As well intended as the proposed House Bill might be, HB 2728 impacts Oregon's and local county abilities to address targeted predator animal management needs effectively and affordably and it poses the possibility of perhaps other unintended future consequences.

For these reasons, the Oregon Cattlemen's Association opposes the adoption of HB 2728.

Thank you for accepting my testimony for the record.

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