



To  
House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources  
Oregon Capitol  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem OR

Date: 2.1.2022

**Sub: Testimony in support of HB 4130 (with -1 amendment) to provide funding for wildlife connectivity infrastructure**

Chair Marsh, Vice Chairs Hudson and Brock-Smith, and members of the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

My name is Dr Sristi Kamal and I am the Senior Representative for Defenders of Wildlife. I am testifying in support of HB 4130 with -1 amendment on behalf of Defenders as well as all nine conservation groups that make up the Oregon Wildlife Coalition. This bill is also a bill of support for the Oregon Conservation Network.

As conservation groups that work to protect Oregon's wildlife, we recognize habitat connectivity as one of the main threats to many wildlife species and their ability their ability to disperse, find mates, and survive harsh weather conditions in search of food. Collision impacts are not limited to big game species alone — when it comes to imperiled species, who by definition are at risk, threats to ecological connectivity is especially detrimental to their population recovery and their ability to reclaim their habitats. Oregon took the first step in addressing the issue when the legislature mandated a statewide connectivity mapping and action plan by ODFW in 2019 — The Oregon Connectivity Assessment and Mapping Project (OCAMP). We see HB 4130 as the logical next step to implementing the outcomes of OCAMP by funding infrastructure development that will address the identified connectivity gaps.

The bill's ask is a relatively small investment when you compare it to the cost of vehicle-wildlife collisions — cost to the vehicle, to human well being and the death of the animal. For e.g. a mule deer collision costs \$9000 on an average, and an elk collision around \$24,000. This cost is also the reason why in a 2020 poll commissioned by Pew, 86% of Oregonians favored constructing more wildlife crossings.

We have plenty of examples that connectivity structures work — our very own Lava Butte underpass reduced wildlife vehicle collisions by more than 85%; Colorado's

wildlife crossings on state highway 9 have reduced collisions by 89% in 5 years, Utah saw a 98.5% reduction in deer mortalities when it built two animal underpasses on a stretch of highway. And such structures will not only protect big animals but will also help little critters that die everyday on our highways.

This bill is also timely as it gives Oregon the advantage in accessing federal monies out of the \$350 million allocated for connectivity infrastructure in INVEST in America Act. Oregon will have to put up state match in many cases to access those federal dollars and this funding can help meet such match.

I would like to conclude with the note that wildlife connectivity is an issue that brings a diverse group of stakeholders together, as you can see in the diversity of testimonies submitted. It is a testament of our shared passion and determination to address this critical economic and ecological issue. I hope you share our passion in this and support HB 4130.

I will be happy to address any questions you might have at my email address: [skamal@defenders.org](mailto:skamal@defenders.org)

Thanking you

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sristi Kamal". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sristi Kamal, Ph.D.  
Senior Representative, Defenders of Wildlife  
Portland, Oregon