

OREGON HUMANE SOCIETY

Date: February 22, 2023

To: Senate Committee On Judiciary

Senator Floyd Prozanski, Chair
Senator Kim Thatcher, Vice-Chair
Senator Sara Gelser Blouin
Senator Dennis Linthicum
Senator James Manning, Jr.

From: Sharon Harmon, President & CEO, Oregon Humane Society

RE: Senate Bill 696

Established in 1868, Oregon Humane Society is Oregon's largest and oldest animal welfare organization with over 50,000 supporters statewide. We are not affiliated with any local or national organization. Today, we ask for your support of SB 696, which would create a dedicated attorney position within the Oregon Department of Justice to prosecute crimes against animals.

Oregon has established some of the strongest animal welfare laws in the country, but in many cases, the law is not upheld because the state does not have an attorney with the specialized knowledge to successfully prosecute those who are cruel to animals. As the longest-established animal welfare organization on the West Coast, Oregon Humane Society recognizes SB-696 as one of the critical steps toward ensuring animals in Oregon are protected by holding people who mistreat them accountable.

Research has consistently shown that crimes against animals have significant negative impacts on our communities and society as a whole. Multiple studies have found that individuals who commit acts of cruelty towards animals are more likely to also engage in other criminal behaviors, such as domestic violence, child abuse, and other offenses.¹ This means that addressing crimes against animals can also help to reduce crime more broadly and make our communities safer.

Cases involving crimes against animals are complicated and require specialized knowledge to successfully prosecute. A study by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) found that one of the primary barriers law enforcement professionals face in responding to animal abuses cases is a lack of training and the special knowledge needed for such cases.² A dedicated attorney would ensure that these cases are given the attention and resources they deserve, and that perpetrators are held accountable for their actions.

PORTLAND CAMPUS
1067 NE Columbia Blvd.
Portland, OR 97211
(503) 285-7722

SALEM CAMPUS
4246 Turner Rd.
Salem, OR 97317
(503) 585-5900

Be more humane.

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Oregonians care about animals. **I urge you to support SB-696** and the creation of an animal cruelty-focused attorney within the department's Criminal Justice Division to prosecute crimes against animals.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Sharon Harmon, CAWA
President & CEO, Oregon Humane Society
sharon@oregonhumane.org
(503) 416-2992

References:

¹ "The Link Between Cruelty to Animals and Violence Toward Humans," Animal Legal Defense Fund, <https://aldf.org/article/the-link-between-cruelty-to-animals-and-violence-toward-humans-2/>

² "ASPCA Announces Groundbreaking Research Study Underscoring Importance of Animal Cruelty Law Enforcement," American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, <https://www.asPCA.org/about-us/press-releases/aspca-announces-groundbreaking-research-study-underscoring-importance-animal>