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Oregon State Senate
Committee on Judiciary
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: SB 696 (Manning) An Act relating to animal cruelty; declaring an emergency — SUPPORT

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Animal Legal Defense Fund and our thousands of supporters in Oregon, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 696, *An Act relating to animal cruelty; declaring an emergency*. We respectfully ask that you vote in favor of this bill to ensure the continued existence of the Animal Cruelty Deputy District Attorney position in Oregon and the continued vigorous enforcement of our state's animal protection laws.

The Animal Legal Defense Fund

The Animal Legal Defense Fund is the nation's preeminent legal advocacy organization for animals. The organization's mission is to protect the lives and advance the interests of animals through the legal system. The Animal Legal Defense Fund files high-impact lawsuits to protect animals from harm, provides free legal assistance and training to prosecutors in their fight against animal cruelty, provides resources and opportunities to law students and professionals to advance the field of animal law, and advocates for strong animal protection legislation.

Animal Cruelty Deputy District Attorney

Since 2013, Jacob Kamins has served as the Animal Cruelty Deputy District Attorney (AC-DDA) in Oregon. This position is currently housed within the Benton County District Attorney's Office, where Mr. Kamins is a duly sworn Deputy District Attorney. The funding for the position of AC-DDA is currently provided pursuant to a Memorandum of Understanding by the Animal Legal Defense Fund. Although the organization provides the funding for this position, the Animal Legal Defense Fund does not employ the AC-DDA; nor does the organization have any authority over the AC-DDA's exercise of prosecutorial discretion.

The AC-DDA performs several roles. When invited by a county, the AC-DDA may prosecute animal cruelty crimes directly. The AC-DDA also regularly consults with prosecutors throughout the state on animal cruelty cases by providing advice on charging decisions, statutory interpretation, trial tactics, and more. Finally, the AC-DDA trains law enforcement and prosecutors throughout the state — and, indeed, throughout the nation — on best practices for animal cruelty investigations and prosecutions.

All our clients are innocent

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The position of AC-DDA is necessary because animal cruelty cases pose unique challenges. Unlike human crime victims, the animal victims in cruelty cases often simultaneously occupy the roles of victim, evidence, and personal property. This trifurcated status results in novel legal issues as the court attempts to reconcile all three roles while complying with court rules and constitutional protections. Additionally, animal cruelty cases often involve large numbers of animal victims, resulting in complex and time-consuming prosecutions. Finally, animal cruelty investigations and prosecutions often involve several different agencies, such as police or sheriff departments, animal control, and humane societies. Because the AC-DDA has specialized training and experience, they are better equipped to efficiently navigate the complexities posed by animal cruelty cases.

Over the past decade, the AC-DDA position has provided incalculable value to the State of Oregon. In this role, Mr. Kamins has personally prosecuted over 250 animal cruelty cases, spanning 22 of Oregon's 36 counties. He has further consulted with prosecutors in an additional 350 cases, in nearly every county of Oregon. Finally, Mr. Kamins has conducted frequent trainings throughout the state for law enforcement and prosecutors. Through his prosecutions, consultations, and trainings, Mr. Kamins has helped to elevate the standard of animal cruelty investigations and prosecutions throughout Oregon, ensuring better outcomes for the State and for crime victims.

The existence and success of Oregon's AC-DDA position has enabled the Animal Legal Defense Fund to expand its model to other states, ensuring better protection of animals across the country. By citing the immense value created by Oregon's AC-DDA, the Animal Legal Defense Fund has secured funding for similar positions in both Virginia and Washington, where other specialized prosecutors have replicated the successes achieved by Oregon's AC-DDA.

The position of Animal Cruelty Deputy District Attorney has, for a decade, provided better outcomes in animal cruelty cases throughout the state of Oregon. To ensure the continued existence of this vital position and its benefits to the State, its citizens, and its animals, we respectfully ask that you vote in favor of Senate Bill 696.

Thank you for your time and all that you do for your communities, both human and animal.

Sincerely,



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