

Submitter: Brittani Johnson  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary  
Measure: HB3214

(respectfully re-submitted with correction to Bill number)

Dear Representatives,

I am writing to urge you to vote NO on HB 3214. As a small business owner, parent and someone who cares deeply about animal welfare and education this bill is superfluous and would negatively impact Oregon children and future animal advocacy, education and conservation efforts.

As an animal presenter for my business, Critter Cabana, I regularly visit classrooms, daycares, afterschool programs, camps and non-profit events with approachable and unique animals that many of these kids have either never heard of or never had a chance to touch and learn about. The most common animal to visit all of these classrooms is a tortoise because they offer a non-threatening but fascinating encounter that is rich with possible teaching moments. Just a few of the topics that have been covered with the aid of a live tortoise: perseverance, personal safety, habitat conservation, responsible animal ownership, and emotional intelligence. This is not even taking into account the curiosity, joy and awe that an in-person animal encounter provides. Often these presentations are given to underserved communities and groups like foster kids, ESL classrooms, hearing or sight impaired students and special education classrooms. Our presentations offer an affordable way (and often reduced or donated) for smaller budget groups to bring animals to kids. If this bill moves forward you will be eliminating this avenue and wiping out the potential for these kids to positively interact with a fascinating species that can teach them so much about themselves, and you could also eliminate their compassion for creatures beyond themselves. How many of these kids will go on to provide important protection or research for Turtles and Tortoises or other creatures that are critical to our world?

Programs invite us back year after year because of the impact these presentations have on their kids. I can't imagine their dismay if we would have to turn them away because of this ill-conceived bill. And don't be fooled that they could find another resource for this: there simply aren't enough accessible programs like ours in the state of Oregon. By eliminating the option for smaller, private programs like ours, that operate ethically, legally and safely they will either resort to asking private citizens to bring in animals or they will not be able to offer these pivotal experiences for students.

We do not make a lot of money on our presentations, and often they are at reduced rates or even donated because we are so passionate about letting all kids experience the joy of a hands-on animal encounter. All animals that travel to presentations are carefully, ethically and legally transported and are already protected under Oregon's robust animal safety acts. This bill is redundant and so broad that it does not actually solve any problems, and only negatively impacts Oregon. Don't take this critical and powerful learning experience away from Oregon kids. VOTE NO on HB3214.

Sincerely,

Brittani Johnson

Owner, Critter Cabana