



Testimony of Humane Voters Oregon, Animal Wellness Action
and Center for a Humane Economy on HB 2689
Senate Committee on Natural Resources

April 4, 2023

Chair Golden, Vice Chair Girod, and Members of the Committee:

Humane Voters Oregon is a nonprofit organization that works in Oregon’s political process and elections to promote humane treatment of animals. Humane Voters Oregon is not affiliated with any other state or national organization.

Animal Wellness Action is a political action committee dedicated to advancing public policy at every level that gives animals more protection under the law, and the Center for a Humane Economy is the affiliated 501c3 dedicated to influencing companies to incorporate and embrace the humane treatment of animals as part of their business practices. They are national organizations with staff in Oregon working on legislative priorities related to their organizational missions.

Humane Voters Oregon, Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a Humane Economy oppose House Bill 2689.

HB 2689 would allow a person with up to 1,000 domestic rabbits to slaughter and sell the rabbits for food without complying with state licensing laws. This would allow the seller to avoid the expenses of complying with licensing requirements, which have been estimated in prior testimony at \$50,000, or of sending the rabbits to a licensed slaughterhouse.

While slaughtering rabbits where they are raised would arguably be more humane than shipping them to slaughter, the overall effect of HB 2689 would be to make it easier to raise and slaughter rabbits for food, and to likely increase the prevalence of doing so (indeed, that seems to be a goal of the legislation). The bill would do that even though rabbits are widely considered by many to be companion animals.¹

We are also concerned about expanding the raising and killing of rabbits for food without any requirements for humane slaughter. As noted in the written testimony of Red Barn Rabbit

¹ See <https://www.oregonhumane.org/petrabbitcare/> and <https://www.oregonhumane.org/wp-content/uploads/Rabbit-Book.pdf> (Oregon Humane Society posts on rabbits as pets); https://www.oregonlive.com/pets/2012/10/pet_talk_thinking_about_adopti.html (Oregon Live article regarding rabbits as pets); <https://www.portland.gov/bps/sustainability/guide-bees-and-livestock/rabbits> (Portland zoning code information simultaneously discussing rabbits as both pets and food; encouraging slaughter “out of the public review, view from neighboring properties, and the view of other rabbits”).

Rescue, special characteristics of rabbits make them especially susceptible to stress and fear. However, rabbits are not covered by Oregon's humane slaughter law, ORS 603.065, which applies only to "[c]attle, equines, sheep or swine." We explored adding rabbits to the statute as part of this bill but were advised the "relating to" clause would not allow that.² A bill to promote raising and killing rabbits for food should at least wait until those basic protections are in place.

Finally, we encourage committee members to ask sponsors and supporters about the estimated costs of meeting state licensing requirements and whether any of those costs would be for measures designed to protect animal welfare. If so, it may be less appropriate to provide an exemption from those requirements.

Thank you for considering our comments.

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² We appreciate Representative Owens meeting with us to discuss this possibility.