

OREGON HUMANE SOCIETY

Date: February 7, 2024

To: House Committee on Judiciary

Representative Jason Kropf, Chair
Representative Tom Anderson, Vice-Chair
Representative Kim Wallan, Vice-Chair
Representative Janelle Bynum
Representative Farrah Chaichi
Representative Charlie Conrad
Representative Rick Lewis
Representative Lisa Reynolds
Representative Thuy Tran
Representative Dwayne Yunker

From: Veronica Broadley, Humane Law Enforcement Support Services Manager, Oregon Humane Society

RE: House Bill 4043

My name is Veronica Broadley, and I am the Support Services Manager of the Humane Law Enforcement Department of the Oregon Humane Society. This department is the only specialty humane law enforcement unit of its kind in Oregon. The team consists of sworn peace officers commissioned by the Oregon State Police who are authorized to enforce Oregon's animal welfare laws and non-sworn professionals working under their direction to accept reports of animal welfare concerns, collect evidence (including living and deceased animals), and support veterinarians performing services in our Animal Crimes Forensic Center. In addition to the investigations performed by our own humane special agents, our department frequently assists police officers in other agencies with their own animal cruelty investigations and provides advice or assistance to various criminal justice community partners.

I have worked in this department for ten years and in that time I have had the opportunity to observe or assist with thousands of animal welfare investigations. I have witnessed the suffering of many animal victims – both those who survived their experience and those who did not.

Today, I ask for your support of HB 4043.

Most reports investigated by our humane special agents are resolved without a criminal prosecution. Most often, when there is a valid concern of neglect of an animal, the best resolution for those involved is in education, guidance, or facilitating access to resources. In doing so, we hope to improve an animal's quality of life while maintaining the human-animal bond and prevent future neglect.

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Our humane special agents can provide direct access to free pet food, litter, and other supplies and can help facilitate access to other resources. Oregon Humane Society has a veterinary social worker who can help facilitate support, a Client Resource Center to help with a variety of needs, a Behavior and Training Department that helps pets and their people resolve training issues together, and a Community Veterinary Hospital that can help families access veterinary care.

Despite these available resources, some people still choose suffering for their pets.

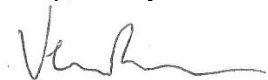
Recently, humane special agents investigated a report of an underweight dog. They spoke with the dog's owner and saw that the dog was underweight. Although this person could have been charged with animal neglect at that time, they were offered another path. Agents provided the owner with free dog food and flea medication, and arranged for a no-cost examination by a veterinarian at OHS' Community Veterinary Hospital. They encouraged the person to reach out to them for help in the future, giving the person their phone numbers to call at any time. Thanks to the resources provided by the humane special agents, the dog's condition had improved by the time of the visit. The Community Veterinary Hospital provided the person with wellness care and more supplies, and the dog left with a clean bill of health.

Unfortunately, just a few short months later, this dog was found dead, curled in a ball, surrounded by other emaciated dogs who had luckily survived. This person made a new choice every day to neglect the dogs, choosing over and over again to neglect them of even the barest minimum of care, not to call for help, until one paid the ultimate price. While this person is now facing criminal charges for their choices, currently this crime is only a misdemeanor. HB 4043, if passed, would provide a path to adequately address such egregious conduct through its change to section 5 of the bill, by making the behavior a felony.

HB 4043 would recognize that as with the existing felony level crime of Aggravated Animal Abuse, there are some animal neglect crimes that are far more serious than others and which cause greater harm to victims and to society. These are not the offenders lacking education; these are people who are choosing neglect. This type of behavior should have the option of being addressed with a felony offense.

Please vote 'yes' on HB 4043.

Respectfully,



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