

Submitter: Brianna Hinricher
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2980

In my honest opinion, HB 2980 is vital to the continuation of wildlife rehabilitation centers in Oregon. Chintimini Wildlife Center opened in 1989 to treat native Oregon wildlife. In doing so, we became the frontline for human-wildlife interactions in the Mid-Valley area. Not only do we educate 'finders' (members of the public who bring in wildlife to our center) on how to transport a wild animal safely to our hospital; we also have a growing education program that goes out to schools, fairs, scout groups and more to educate people of all ages about wildlife and how to remain safe around them. Our thriving internship program trains future wildlife veterinarians and rehabilitators on how to care for these animals and how to interact with public. We have had to do all of this relying mainly on public donations.

Unfortunately, with the 2020 Covid pandemic, donations to all non-profits have dropped drastically. This has left us and other facilities struggling to keep up with the demand of wildlife rehabilitation and education. Our buildings and enclosures are aging and require major upgrades that we cannot currently afford. New legislature requiring additional licenses with a variety of policies has been another drain on our resources. HB 2980 would supplement our current income to bring back the financial safety we can no longer get from the public.

ODFW knows that centers like ours take in thousands of calls that would otherwise flood their phonelines. We step in and educate when a human or animal could be in danger from the way the animal has been handled. We teach local law enforcement how to safely transport larger wildlife species to our facility. Our educational presentations help to prevent future negative interactions between the public and wildlife. All this is on top of the daily care we give to the wildlife patients and resident ambassador animals at our center.

In the past decade, two of the closest rehab centers to us have closed and no one has opened a new rehab. This has brought more animals and citizens to our door and put further financial strain on our programs. Those that are interested in building new rehab programs are hesitant due to the current lack of funding. HB 2980 would bring our wildlife rehab centers back from the brink of extinction and encourage others to assist in this effort.