

**Chair Lively, Vice Chairs Gamba and Levy, and Members of the Committee, my name is Heather Gibons, and I am speaking on behalf of Chintimini Wildlife Center, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit wildlife rehabilitation center located in Corvallis, in support of HB 2980.**

Chintimini was part of the original workgroup for this House Bill, and we are honored to be able to speak on the impact that it would have if passed. This bill takes important steps to educate the public and protect Oregon's native wildlife, two things that are integral to our mission as well.

Chintimini's Wildlife Hospital accepts native birds, mammals, amphibians, and reptiles for the purpose of rehabilitation and release. Our patients are split between Corvallis, Salem, Eugene, and more than 100 distinct towns in the Willamette Valley area. We see animals from rural, urban, and suburban areas, and interact with community members from those areas 365 days a year.

We are an education center as well and we have been working in our community to increase awareness of how to safely coexist with wildlife. Each year, our 2-person Education team does more than 200 presentations on and off site, including with school groups, police officers, local tribes, and more. Each of these presentations includes information on what to do and what not to do when faced with injured or sick wildlife.

In 2024, we received over 11,000 calls to our wildlife hotline, providing a resource for informing the public on what to do should they encounter sick or injured wildlife. Unfortunately, we see many improper interactions with wildlife perpetuated on social media, and in our communities.

Recently we received a call where employees held a Canada goose symptomatic of bird flu, also known as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, in a local restaurant kitchen—while serving dinner to patrons—trying to help the animal, but posing a huge public health safety risk. We are here to assist sick and injured wildlife, and make sure the public stays safe when interacting with said wildlife. In this case we were able to immediately advise the caller to get the goose outside and contact the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

With the increased presence of Avian Influenza, we have been the frontline for many such cases, and served as an accessible resource for the public's questions. We are also a frontline resource for other zoonotic diseases, such as rabies, parvo, and distemper.

Last year we accepted 2,215 patients into our wildlife hospital, which was a four-year high and the third-most since our founding in 1989. We do this all with only 3 full-time Rehabilitation Staff members, a part-time veterinarian, no onsite x-ray machine, and a wildlife hospital over 30 years old, which was never intended to be a permanent option. In the last 10 years, two rehabilitation centers have closed down near us, resulting in an expansion of our service area to be the resource the public and wildlife need. We receive no state or federal funding, and subsist on the generosity of our community and private grants.

Every year we struggle to support the increasing patient numbers, and the costs of feeding, housing, and healing 172 different species of animals. The funds provided by this bill help ensure we remain a frontline resource for Willamette Valley's wildlife and humans.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony and strongly urge you to support House Bill 2980,

Thank you for your time,

Chintimini Wildlife Center Staff