

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

Allow me to first thank each of you for your service in leadership, steering the state of Oregon into this complicated, challenging, and multi-faceted 21st century. I sincerely appreciate the time, dedication, and commitment each of you shows in fulfilling your duty as an elected legislator of our beautiful state. I am writing today to voice my unqualified support for HB 2980, a bill to establish a Wildlife Stewardship Program that will fund Coexistence Wildlife Biologist staff positions, develop wildlife outreach and education programs, and provide much-needed grant funding for already existing, front-line professionals who are dedicated to handling on behalf of our communities the at-times fraught interface between wildlife and human populations. From the largest of our cities to the smallest of our rural localities, Oregon's wildlife rehabilitators are there to serve the needs of your constituents, and the needs of wildlife that Oregon's citizens at times adversely, if unintentionally, impact. Oregon's wildlife rehabilitators have been for too long overlooked assets. It is time for Oregon's wildlife rehabilitators to be recognized as valued resources that benefit all of Oregon's citizenry by providing a unique, and uniquely specialized, service. Today, you have the enviable opportunity of setting our state on a path of unprecedented, nationally impactful leadership. You have the opportunity today to not only ensure that the needs of HB 2980's nominal subjects, wildlife inhabitants of the state of Oregon, are met, but to ensure that the needs of your constituents are met as well. All inhabitants of Oregon will be beneficiaries of HB 2980. I know from personal experience as a hands-on volunteer at my community's wildlife rehabilitation facility that the citizens who reside here are both concerned with, and compassionate towards, wildlife that has been adversely impacted by human activities and infrastructure. We provide the answer when your child finds a bird injured by a pet dog or cat, or one lying dazed under your window after a window strike. We provide the answer when you find an orphaned squirrel or fallen nestling in your backyard, or when your neighbor comes to you wondering what to do about a racoon who is nursing her kits underneath the porch. What should you do when you find a red-tailed hawk, a sharp shinned hawk, or a Cooper's hawk, upright but stationary, injured and unable to fly, in the road? What should you do when you see a Great-Horned Owl struggling impossibly to free itself from a tangle of rusted roadside barbed wire fencing, or notice one held firmly in the jaws of old leghold traps, long forgotten in an outbuilding on a property you're clearing out for your 90-year-old mother? I can bear witness to every one of these situations; I have seen every one of these animals—and the reason I have seen them is because, fortunately, one of your constituents found them and cared enough to ask, "What do I do now?" "Who can help?" Your constituents want the answer. Oregon's wildlife rehabilitators are the answer. I can

personally attest to the interest, appreciation, and ever-growing awareness of community members with respect to the challenges inherent in the wildlife-human interface, and the desire of community members—your constituents—to find solutions through humane and respectful interventions. I routinely encounter, whether through my volunteer work or through my active social and business networks, individuals who, like me, applaud and champion the efforts of organizations that recover, release, and rehabilitate our community's native wildlife. HB 2980 will serve as a material and impactful manifestation of legislative leadership that ensures the vitality and vibrancy of Oregon for years to come. HB 2980 is the answer for Oregon wildlife. HB 2980 is the answer your constituents are looking for.