

Submitter: Carolyn Lee
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4034

Dear Chairs Helm and Owens, and Members of the Committee,

As a board member of two small foster-based rescue organizations, I see firsthand that the rescues licensed by the Animal Rescue Entities program are essential. They lead with compassion while providing for the majority of animal rescue needs in our state. They take an enormous burden off our local county and city animal control departments, which do not have the capacity to handle the number of animals in need of help. They are also assisting Oregon families in managing the affordability crisis by subsidizing adoption fees, operating pet food banks, running training courses, providing free vaccines, hosting spay-and-neuter clinics, and offering a variety of other veterinary services. Most importantly, they save the lives of thousands of animals each year and facilitate their adoptions into forever homes.

We rely on these organizations, and the ARE program cannot continue to be funded at the expense of the very rescues serving on the frontlines. If rescues go under because of unacceptably high fees, local governments, already facing budget crises, simply cannot fill the void. HB 4034 is an elegant solution that ensures rescues don't face exorbitant penalties for violations unrelated to animal welfare. The bill stabilizes the program and makes it truly self-sustaining, which protects our general fund dollars. It keeps this needed program off the budgetary chopping block.

Oversight of animal rescues is necessary to ensure both the humane treatment of animals and safeguards for Oregonians seeking to adopt a pet. The vast majority of rescues do incredible work to save animals. But there is a very dark, insidious underworld around breeding and selling animals, where bad actors see animals as crops or commodities, meant for one purpose: to make money. Fake rescues are driven by intense greed and exploit our collective love of animals. They show no concern for animal welfare or the people they scam. Instead of eliminating oversight or focusing on the clerical errors made by reputable shelters, we should instead be monitoring the activities of these disreputable actors.

The Animal Rescue Entity program is needed to protect both animals and the public from those who perpetrate abuse and fraud. But, again, it cannot exist at the expense of our rescues, who do so much good for our communities. Please pass HB 4034 and save the program, and I also encourage you to come back in 2027 to expand it to include breeder licensing.

Thank you,

Carolyn Lee
Kayla's Foundation