



## Testimony in Support of Oregon HB 4034

### Submitted by Dogs for Better Lives (DBL)

Dogs for Better Lives (DBL) has been licensed with the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) as an Animal Rescue Entity (ARE) since the requirement took effect in 2021. Although DBL is not traditionally a rescue organization, we fall under ODA's jurisdiction solely due to the current definition of an ARE. This misalignment has created significant and unnecessary regulatory burdens that impede our mission.

#### Issue One: Burdensome Reporting Requirements With No Path for Correction

For three years—2021, 2022, and 2023—DBL passed all ODA inspections without issue. In 2024, despite no changes to our intake or exit procedures, we unexpectedly failed an inspection and were issued a Notice of Violation followed by a Consent Order, **without any opportunity to address or correct the findings**.

Most issues cited were minor clerical or reporting errors that could have been easily fixed. Instead, DBL was forced to hire legal counsel and devote substantial staff time to navigating an unnecessarily adversarial process. This diverted time, money, and energy away from our core mission—placing assistance dogs with individuals across the United States who rely on them for daily living.

#### Issue Two: Misclassification of Assistance Dog Organizations as AREs

We respectfully request updates to Oregon's statutory definition of an Animal Rescue Entity, including clear exemptions for accredited assistance dog organizations. DBL does **not** operate as a rescue in Oregon. Our Oregon program exists solely to train, raise, and place highly skilled service dogs with clients nationwide.

The dogs in our Oregon program come exclusively from:

- Purpose-bred litters through DBL-owned breeding dogs, and
- Breeding programs of accredited assistance dog organizations.

**Note:** While DBL does train a small number of shelter-dog candidates in **Texas** and **Georgia**, through partnerships with OPK and AHS, these activities take place entirely out of state and **have no connection to or impact on our Oregon operations**.

Despite this, being classified as an ARE creates several significant challenges:

#### 1. Compliance Requirements



ODA requires that any dog imported into Oregon must have a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (CVI) and proof of rabies vaccination—including puppies and assistance dogs that already receive rigorous health evaluations.

- CVIs are costly and often difficult to obtain.
- Many veterinarians do not issue CVIs for routine program-related movement.

## **2. Unnecessary Financial and Logistical Burdens**

DBL already upholds health standards that exceed those required by ODA. Nevertheless, current regulations force us to obtain CVIs for every movement in or out of Oregon, regardless of the dog's health status. These requirements impose financial strain and administrative complexity without improving animal welfare.

## **3. Lack of Exemptions for Assistance Dog Organizations**

Unlike other states, Oregon provides **no exemption** for accredited assistance dog programs. To our knowledge, DBL is the only assistance dog organization in Oregon classified as an ARE, despite our long-standing best practices and nationally recognized standards.

## **4. Operational Challenges for Breeding and Placement**

Current rules require CVIs for puppies born in neighboring states—even those just over the Washington border—before they can be brought into Oregon. These burdensome requirements disrupt breeding partnerships and complicate timely placement of puppies into training programs.

### **Conclusion**

HB 4034 offers necessary clarification and relief. Aligning Oregon's regulations with the realities of assistance dog organizations will allow programs like DBL to focus on what we do best: training and placing service dogs that change lives.

We urge your support for HB 4034 and for reasonable exemptions that recognize the unique and essential role of assistance dog organizations.

Respectfully,

*Trish Welch*

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Vice President of Operations

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