

Submitter: Colleen Withers

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4134

My family owns and operates 7th-generation Withers Ranch in Lake County, Oregon. We live and work on land where wolves and other large carnivores are part of the landscape. Sharing the land with wildlife is a daily reality for ranching families like ours. While we value healthy wildlife populations, the presence of wolves carries very real costs for working ranches.

When livestock, horses, or working dogs are injured or killed, the loss extends far beyond the market value of the animal. It is time spent documenting and investigating, operational disruption, stress on livestock and people, and uncertainty about whether compensation will be available. For family operations working on tight margins, repeated losses create chronic financial and mental strain.

Oregon made important progress last session by strengthening wolf compensation policy. However, without stable, dedicated funding, those commitments remain uncertain. HB 4134 provides the durable funding mechanism necessary to ensure compensation and conflict reduction tools are available consistently and long term.

Compensation alone is not enough. Proactive conflict prevention tools — range riders, deterrents, monitoring, and rapid response — are critical to reducing losses and preventing escalation. These efforts only work when funding is reliable.

HB 4134 also supports broader investments in wildlife habitat, invasive species management, wildfire risk reduction, and rural workforce development. These are not separate from ranching — healthy working lands are essential to Oregon's landscapes and rural communities.

The presence of wolves may provide a public benefit, but the costs are borne disproportionately by rural landowners. If Oregon is committed to conservation and keeping family ranches intact, those costs must be shared.

On behalf of Withers Ranch, I respectfully urge your support of HB 4134 to ensure durable, on-the-ground support for rural communities living with wildlife.

Thank you for your consideration.