



Animal Welfare Institute

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March 13, 2025

Colorado General Assembly
Agriculture, Water & Natural Resources Committee
200 E Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203

RE: HB 25-1283 A bill for an act concerning measures that implement the wild horse working group's legislative recommendations

Good afternoon, my name is Tessa Archibald, and I serve on the Colorado Wild Horse Working Group, representing equine advocates. My testimony today is not intended to represent the views of the working group as a whole, but rather just one of its members. I am an equine policy associate for the Animal Welfare Institute (AWI), and I manage the Homes for Horses Coalition (HHC), a network of over five hundred equine rescues and sanctuaries around the country, including 25 member organizations in Colorado. AWI, HHC, and our collective membership are deeply committed to the protection of domestic and wild equines.

I urge the Agriculture, Water & Natural Resources Committee to support HB 25-1283 to implement the Wild Horse Working Group's first-year recommendations. As you all know, the working group comprises a diverse set of stakeholders, all of whom provided input toward the development of these recommendations. We worked together for over a year, examining the issue, visiting herd management areas (HMAs), and discussing actions necessary to protect horses on the range and support the welfare of those removed from the range.

The working group's collaborative effort resulted in a strong set of recommendations. Now, for these recommendations to have the desired impact, an entity must be designated and tasked with carrying them out. HB 25-1283 would identify and empower such an entity through the Colorado Department of Agriculture and thus ensure that the working group's time, effort, and careful consideration of the issue results in actions taken for the benefit of Colorado's wild horses and their many supporters in the state and, indeed, across the country.

The bill proposes the involvement of the CDA in the application of humane fertility control to manage the wild horse populations in the state. Support is needed to comprehensively apply immunocontraceptive fertility control in the herds. While incredible partner groups have spent years managing the state's fertility control programs, and we have some of the most successful and active programs in the country—that work has been done by volunteers, and these volunteers have made clear that, in some places, they could use a hand. This bill gives CDA the

opportunity to lend that hand and ensure high fertility control coverage across all HMAs, so as to limit dangerous, stressful, and expensive roundups and removals of wild horses.

The bill also establishes an advisory group to the department, similar in make-up to that of the working group. An advisory group with background in the issue would play an essential role—providing ongoing assessment of wild horse management in the state, tracking progress, and offering additional insight as needed. In addition, the advisory group would help implement some of the recommendations, such as the development and distribution of resources for new mustang owners to ensure smooth, successful adoptions.

We are very grateful that the legislature had the foresight to create the Wild Horse Working Group in 2023. This bill represents a welcome and natural next step forward. As Governor Polis has declared, it is Horse Protection Month in Colorado, and so I implore this committee to take action for horses and move forward in support of HB 25-1283.

Sincerely,

Tessa Archibald
Equine Policy Associate, Animal Welfare Institute
Manager, Homes for Horses Coalition