



from the office of

SENATOR TIM KNOPP

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Feb. 19, 2018

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Senate approves bill to clarify law affecting equine therapy centers

SALEM, OR. - Today, the Oregon Senate has approved a bill that will clarify a vague law restricting where and how equine therapy centers offer services. [Senate Bill 1533](#) was introduced by the Senate Interim Committee on Workforce on behalf of Senator Tim Knopp (R-Bend) and Representative Duane Stark (R-Grants Pass).

Equine therapy centers enhance the quality of life for Oregonians of all ages with physical, mental or emotional needs. There are nearly 20 of these centers all over the state helping veterans suffering from PTSD, children with learning, emotional or behavior issues and anyone with physical disabilities. These centers offer a variety of therapy and counseling services, including traditional physical therapy, equine assisted psychotherapy, ecotherapy and therapeutic riding.

However, it was found that the current law was unclear about the ability to operate one of these facilities on land zoned for exclusive farm use. This bill clarifies that facilities that offer equine and equine-affiliated therapeutic and counseling activities are permitted on exclusive farm use zoned area.

"As a state legislature, we've said for a long time that we appreciate equine therapy, but there was some confusion as to what point it stops being equine therapy," said Representative Stark. "Some counties were interpreting the law so that as soon as a patient is not physically touching the horse, the therapy is no longer permitted on exclusive farm land. This bill removed the ambiguity about whether a patient had to be touching the horse the entire time."

"For an increasing number of people, hippotherapy and equine-affiliated counseling have become integral parts of treating and managing their physical, mental, or emotional difficulties," said Senator Knopp. "Senate Bill 1533 will create certainty for hippotherapy providers and facilities, ensuring that the Oregonians they serve can continue to enjoy the benefits of equine-affiliated therapy and counseling."

"This very important legislation will provide a valuable platform from which our therapeutic riding centers can continue to serve our fellow Oregonians most in need due to physical, cognitive, and emotional challenges without the constant concern of the rug being pulled from under us due to some ambiguities in the current exclusive farm use code. Thousands of Oregonians across the state will continue to be effectively and seamlessly served in our centers thanks to this valuable legislation," said Jeff Campbell, whose wife co-founded Healing Reins Therapeutic Riding Center in Bend.

SB 1533 received unanimous support from the Oregon Senate. The bill now moves to the House for further consideration.

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