

Chair, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Jessica Presso, and I am writing to strongly oppose Senate Bill 25B-001.

This bill is not about fiscal responsibility. It is not about good governance. It is about undermining the will of the people and sabotaging a program that Colorado voters, Colorado scientists, and Colorado communities have worked on for years.

In 2020, Coloradans voted to reintroduce wolves. It was a statewide decision, a democratic mandate. Cutting funding now isn't just about wolves, it's about whether we respect the outcome of an election. If we allow short-term political pressure from special interests to erase the will of the voters, we weaken democracy itself. And it's telling that Initiative 13, the effort to stop wolf reintroduction, couldn't even get enough signatures to make the ballot, despite months of organizing. Even the Colorado Cattlemen's Association and Club 20 opposed it. The people have spoken, twice.

Second, let's talk about science. Colorado Parks and Wildlife's wolf plan makes it clear: 30–50 wolves over 3–5 years are needed to create a viable, self-sustaining population. We've released 25 wolves so far. We are just one year away from meeting that target. To stop now would throw away five years of planning, monitoring, and investment, and it would destabilize the wolf population. That instability is what increases conflicts. A stable wolf population, by contrast, allows CPW and ranchers to predict pack movements, plan ahead, and implement the very nonlethal conflict-prevention tools ranchers are asking for.

Third, CPW experts, not politicians, should be making these calls. In January, the CPW Commission voted 10 to 1 against a petition to pause reintroduction. Wildlife biologists, not politicians, are best equipped to determine how many wolves Colorado needs. Political meddling risks undermining everything CPW and stakeholders have built.

Fourth, the money. This bill is built on the claim that wolf reintroduction is "over budget." That is simply false. Over the last two years, CPW has spent *less* than its legislative appropriations: \$1.79 million in FY22–23 and \$1.57 million in FY23–24, against a \$5.3 million allocation. The next release would cost about \$264,000, an amount so small it barely makes a dent in a \$1.2 billion budget shortfall. Killing a statewide mandate, undermining science, and jeopardizing an entire reintroduction program to save 0.02% of the state budget is not fiscal responsibility, it is political theater.

Fifth, wolves are not just symbolic. They are working animals of the ecosystem. Wolves restore balance to prey populations, keep forests and riparian systems healthy, and support biodiversity. By reducing overbrowsing of young trees and vegetation, they help riverside areas recover, soils hold more water, and plant communities diversify. These healthier landscapes are more resilient to drought and wildfire.

And that matters right now: Colorado is experiencing record-setting fires, and as our weather becomes more erratic, it is increasingly important to have healthy ecosystems that can withstand those stresses. Restoring natural balance through apex predators like wolves

strengthens our ecosystems' defenses against catastrophic fire and climate extremes. Wolves are not just an ecological investment, they are a climate resilience investment.

Finally, the future. If we cut corners now, the wolf population may fail to become self-sustaining. Genetic bottlenecks, instability, and dispersal problems could undermine the whole program. That would mean more livestock conflicts, more community frustration, and more wasted resources. Doing it right the first time is the most responsible thing we can do.

Members of the Committee: this bill is a mistake. It rejects the will of Colorado voters. It ignores the recommendations of CPW scientists. It creates instability for ranchers and communities. And it risks wasting millions of dollars already invested, all to shave a fraction of a percent off the state budget.

Colorado is better than half-measures. We owe it to voters, to science, to our democracy, and to the land itself to see this program through. Please reject 25B-001.

Thank you.

Senate State, Veterans, & Military Affairs

08/21/2025 Upon Adjournment

SB25B-001 Processes to Reduce Spending During Shortfall

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
<p>Elise Lowe-Vaughn Against Rewilding America Now</p>	<p>Honorable Legislators,</p> <p>My name is Elise Lowe-Vaughn, and I work for Rewilding America Now, a national environmental NGO dedicated to restoring native wildlife and ecosystems. We've spent years advancing science-based conservation in Colorado and across the country. On behalf of RAN and as a Colorado resident, I urge you to reject Senate Bill 25B-0010.</p> <p>This bill would gut Colorado's wolf recovery program—the very program mandated by voters in 2020. That democratic decision followed years of debate, and it entrusted Colorado Parks and Wildlife, not politicians, to lead with science. To overturn it now is a direct attack on both democracy and science.</p> <p>The facts are stark. CPW's plan requires 30–50 wolves over 3–5 years to build a genetically diverse, self-sustaining population of 150–200 wolves. Yet today, only 15 wolves survive in Colorado, from just four breeding pairs. If we halt reintroductions now, this population will collapse. That means not only wasted years of work and millions of taxpayer dollars—but also the loss of wolves from Colorado once again.</p> <p>The financial argument for this bill does not hold water. It diverts just \$264,000—a quarter of one percent of the Health Insurance Affordability Enterprise's \$100 million budget. Cutting \$264,000 here destroys a program that could generate tens of millions annually for rural Colorado through wolf tourism. We know this from Yellowstone: a \$30 million investment in wolf restoration there produces \$82 million every year for local communities. In contrast, abandoning Colorado's program to "save" \$250,000 is fiscal malpractice.</p> <p>Environmentally, the benefits are profound. Wolves are a keystone species that restore balance to deer and elk populations, protect biodiversity, and even help slow climate change through forest regeneration. They also help curb chronic wasting disease, which is spreading unchecked in Colorado and threatens to devastate our deer and elk herds. Wolves also contribute to wildfire resilience. Overabundant elk and deer strip young aspens and willows, leaving dry, brushy landscapes that fuel</p>

	<p>hotter, more destructive fires. By keeping ungulate populations in check, wolves allow healthy forests and riparian areas to regenerate. Creating moister, more diverse habitats creates natural firebreaks that help by retaining water on the land and reducing the severity of wildfires. In a state already suffering a devastating fire season, removing wolves undercuts one of the most cost-effective natural defenses we have.</p> <p>As for livestock conflicts—these are preventable. Decades of evidence show that non-lethal coexistence tools work. Colorado even has a dedicated fund to help ranchers implement them. We can support both wolves and agriculture without dismantling recovery.</p> <p>This bill is scientifically reckless, fiscally irresponsible, and democratically unjust. It would erase years of work, silence the will of Colorado voters, and sacrifice the future of our public lands.</p> <p>On behalf of Rewilding America Now, and as someone who is devoted to science-based wildlife policy, I urge you: stand with the voters, stand with the science, and stand with Colorado’s future. Reject Senate Bill 25B-0010.</p> <p>Thank you....Elise Lowe-Vaughn</p> <p>https://www.rewildingamericanow.org/ Elise Lowe-Vaughn Director, Workforce Initiatives and Wild Horse Policy Email: elise@rewildingamericanow.org Phone: +1 (303) 506-1975 Website: rewildingamericanow.org</p>
<p>Jessica Presso Against herself</p>	<p>Chair, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Jessica Presso, and I am writing to strongly oppose Senate Bill 25B-001.</p> <p>This bill is not about fiscal responsibility. It is not about good governance. It is about undermining the will of the people and sabotaging a program that Colorado voters, Colorado scientists, and Colorado communities have worked on for years.</p> <p>In 2020, Coloradans voted to reintroduce wolves. It was a statewide decision, a democratic mandate. Cutting funding now isn’t just about wolves, it’s about whether we respect the outcome of an election. If we allow short-term political pressure from special interests to erase the will of the voters, we weaken democracy itself. And it’s telling that Initiative 13, the effort to stop wolf reintroduction, couldn’t even get enough signatures to make the ballot, despite months of organizing. Even the</p>

	<p>Colorado Cattlemen’s Association and Club 20 opposed it. The people have spoken, twice.</p> <p>Second, let’s talk about science. Colorado Parks and Wildlife’s wolf plan makes it clear: 30–50 wolves over 3–5 years are needed to create a viable, self-sustaining population. We’ve released 25 wolves so far. We are just one year away from meeting that target. To stop now would throw away five years of planning, monitoring, and investment, and it would destabilize the wolf population. That instability is what increases conflicts. A stable wolf population, by contrast, allows CPW and ranchers to predict pack movements, plan ahead, and implement the very nonlethal conflict-prevention tools ranchers are asking for.</p> <p>Third, CPW experts, not politicians, should be making these calls. In January, the CPW Commission voted 10 to 1 against a petition to pause reintroduction. Wildlife biologists, not politicians, are best equipped to determine how many wolves Colorado needs. Political meddling risks undermining everything CPW and stakeholders have built.</p> <p>Fourth, the money. This bill is built on the claim that wolf reintroduction is “over budget.” That is simply false. Over the last two years, CPW has spent less than its legislative appropriations: \$1.79 million in FY22–23 and \$1.57 million in FY23–24, against a \$5.3 million allocation. The next release would cost about \$264,000, an amount so small it barely makes a dent in a \$1.2 billion budget shortfall. Killing a statewide mandate, undermining science, and jeopardizing an entire reintroduction program to save 0.02% of the state budget is not fiscal responsibility, it is political theater.</p> <p>Fifth, wolves are not just symbolic. They are working animals of the ecosystem. Wolves restore balance to prey populations, keep forests and riparian systems healthy, and support biodiversity. By reducing overbrowsing of young trees and vegetation, they help riverside areas recover, soils hold more water, and plant communities diversify. These healthier landscapes are more resilient to drought and wildfire.</p> <p>And that matters right now: Colorado is experiencing record-setting fires, and as our weather becomes more erratic, it is increasingly important to have healthy ecosystems that can withstand those stresses. Restoring natural balance through apex predators like wolves strengthens our ecosystems’ defenses against catastrophic fire and climate extremes. Wolves are not just an ecological investment, they are a climate resilience investment.</p> <p>Finally, the future. If we cut corners now, the wolf population may fail to become self-sustaining. Genetic bottlenecks, instability, and dispersal problems could undermine the whole program. That would mean more livestock conflicts, more community frustration, and more wasted resources. Doing it right the first time is the most responsible thing we can do.</p> <p>Members of the Committee: this bill is a mistake. It rejects the will of Colorado voters. It ignores the recommendations of CPW scientists. It creates instability for ranchers and communities. And it risks wasting millions of dollars already invested, all to shave a fraction of a percent off the state budget.</p>
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