

Chair and Committee Members, My name is Maria Dennis.

I am here today to ask that you vote in favour of Senate Bill 2331. This bill would create the formation of a working group that would work with Theodore Roosevelt National Park to help manage the wild horses. The resolution before you is asking your federal legislators to help get federal protection for this herd since they are not protected under the Wild and Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act.

I live in the UK, and the horses that you are privileged to have on your lands matter deeply to me. They represent something that is the most vital and devastating issue facing humanity – our depletion of the natural world and the degradation of the wild.

I am compelled to bring the horses voices to you, as gentle creatures they whisper, but this does not disguise the power of their voice. They have a birthright, as all creatures of Earth do, to live a life of well-being, and this is as important to them as ours is to us. Human privileging silences them, we drown out their whispers in our clamour to control and dominate Nature. These horses right to and desire for well-being is equal to ours, and if you asked them directly, this is what they would say. They live rich lives, with deep family and friendship bonds, they suffer psychologically from separation, and from adverse events and trauma, much like we do. This is scientifically ‘proven’ not mere romanticism. I follow and support the work of organisations in the US that are advocating for and supporting the wild horses. I find it devastating to know how terribly the horses suffer in roundups and knowing what I do about the rich family life of these horses, the stress and trauma these cause from the physical pressure, but the grief and distress from the breaking up of their families and extended social groups.

Knowing they are protected, is so desperately important to me, and I am sure many others like me, because it offers hope in a time when there is so much exploitation, so much neglect of our fellow creatures, that there are people that will listen, and will step up to be the type of custodians, guardians and protectors that the wild needs. This is a plea from their heart to yours.

You can tell the heart of a person by the way they treat other animals – you can tell the heart of humanity by the way they treat other animals.

Thank you for your time and your consideration of my testimony.