



## TESTIMONY

### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

February 21, 2019

#### Oregon Farm Bureau Support for HB 2795

Oregon Farm Bureau supports HB 2795. As a reference, the Oregon Farm Bureau Federation (OFB) is the state's most comprehensive general agricultural association, representing over 6,700 farm and ranch families in Oregon who make up a significant part of our rural communities.

Oregon Farm Bureau is supportive of efforts to improve cougar management. HB 2795 would allow counties to decide if participating in an Oregon Department Fish and Wildlife pilot program is right for their community by putting it to a vote of the community. The pilot program under HB 2795 would allow county residents to pursue and take cougars with the use of dogs within county boundaries. After the initial pilot period, OFB would support making the program statewide if it is successful.

OFB policy supports HB 2795. We "support the use of dogs to assist in controlling cougar numbers where a perceived threat to livestock or humans occurs." We support measures to mitigate the risk apex predators pose to livestock, pets, property, and humans. Currently, ODFW estimates there are 6,600 cougars in Oregon, over double what the state management plan sets as a minimum<sup>1</sup>. The Wildlife Policy (ORS 496.012), states "*the purpose of this plan is to maintain cougar populations while managing cougar conflicts with humans, livestock, and other game mammals.*" HB 2795 is in alignment with the spirit of the ODFW Management Plan by also allowing the use of dogs statewide in non-lethal pursuit of cougars. This is a critical management tool to haze and condition cougars who live near rural communities or near livestock operations to remain on public lands.

Thank you for your time and consideration on HB 2795. For more information, please contact Jonathan Sandau at [sandau@oregonfb.org](mailto:sandau@oregonfb.org).

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<sup>1</sup> 2017 Oregon Cougar Management Plan