

Dear Chair Helm and Committee Members,

I am a co-founder of and advisor to the Benton County Agriculture and Wildlife Protection Program ([AWPP](#)). This county taxpayer-funded program has awarded grants for the purchase of wildlife deterrents such as livestock guardian animals, electrified fencing, scare devices, and protective housing to approximately forty farms scattered throughout the Oregon Coast Range. I am writing in support of HB 4148 and the funding it would provide to create a Wildlife Coexistence Program at ODFW.

One thing we have learned through our county program is that a surprising number of farmers are unaware of how common cougars and other predators are and the threat that they pose to unprotected livestock.

This lack of understanding is because there are no programs for educating farmers how to proactively protect their livestock from predation by wildlife. Most farmers simply rely on U.S. Government “county trappers” to kill wildlife in response to the loss of unprotected livestock.

HB 4148 would provide critical funding to add five wildlife coexistence biologists and a wildlife coexistence outreach coordinator position within ODFW and provide much needed outreach and education efforts to the farming community about living with wildlife.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Respectfully,

Randy Comeleo