

Submitter: Jimmy Flatt
On Behalf Of: Hunters of Color - Oregon Chapter
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and
Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB769

Dear Chair Golden, Vice Chair Nash, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jimmy Flatt, and I am the Executive Director of Hunters of Color (HOC), a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit headquartered in Corvallis, Oregon. I am writing on behalf of our organization and its members across the state to express our strong support for Senate Bill 769. This legislation provides counties the ability to decide, through a democratic process, whether to allow the use of hounds to hunt or pursue cougars, while maintaining the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's (ODFW) oversight and science-based management framework.

Hunters of Color is committed to fostering equitable access to hunting and conservation for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. A central part of our mission is advocating for policies that advance responsible wildlife management, create opportunities for Oregonians to feed themselves, and ensure the sustainability of game populations.

Cougars hold deep ecological and cultural significance. However, they are also apex predators that exert substantial pressure on deer and elk populations, particularly in areas where habitat loss has already placed these species at risk. Oregon's Willamette Valley, where the majority of our members reside, has lost 98% of its oak savanna habitat—a critical ecosystem for sustaining deer and elk. Without appropriate predator management, the recovery of these game species remains an uphill battle.

Why SB 769 Matters:

SB 769 is not about eliminating oversight or creating a "free-for-all." This bill preserves ODFW's authority to regulate seasons, quotas, and all aspects of cougar management. It simply allows counties to decide whether hound hunting can be used as a tool to manage cougar populations. This localized decision-making empowers communities to address unique challenges in their regions while ensuring all regulations remain science-based.

As an organization with an R3 (recruit, retain, reactivate) program, we strongly advocate for policies that create more opportunities for hunters and anglers. Expanding options for responsible predator management will not only benefit Oregon's wildlife but will also enhance access for hunters to provide food for their

families. Many of our members rely on hunting to feed their families, and proper management of game species ensures this opportunity is available for current and future generations.

Key Points to Emphasize:

Even if counties opt in to allowing hound hunting, ODFW will still set all seasons, quotas, and regulations. SB 769 does not diminish ODFW's oversight.

This bill provides an additional management tool within the existing science-based framework, ensuring a balanced approach to predator and prey species.

Local choice empowers communities to address their specific needs while ensuring that wildlife management remains regulated by ODFW's expertise.

We at Hunters of Color believe in fostering harmony between people, wildlife, and the land. SB 769 provides a balanced, science-based, and locally informed approach to managing cougars and protecting the game species that so many Oregonians rely on.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I urge you to support SB 769 to ensure Oregon continues to lead in sustainable wildlife management.

Sincerely,

Jimmy Flatt

Executive Director, Hunters of Color

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