

Submitter: Brad Davis
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and
Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB769

I support SB 769 because it gives us a chance to protect the balance between cougar populations and other wildlife—like mule deer and elk—without imposing a blanket policy on every county. I've grown up hunting and fishing across Oregon, and I've witnessed how our deer herds are in real decline. Our natural resource agencies have attempted a variety of mitigation efforts in response to this alarming decline of mule deer populations such as lowering deer tag numbers and extensive habitat projects, which have not produced great results in comparison to the effort and funding expended. Over the last 10 years there has even been intense practices of hound hunting for cougars through private contracting with the state; although successful this is costly for our states resources, and SB 769 would let the people take on this cost where it is still needed! Current cougar management efforts seem largely ineffective, given that thousands of tags are issued annually but yield very few harvested cougars. Allowing counties to decide for themselves whether to permit hound hunting can help tailor solutions to local conditions. I find it sensible for rural counties with active cougar conflicts to have the option of using proven, selective methods to manage these predators. I'm a firm believer in responsible hunting practices, and hound hunting, when regulated, can be both humane and practical.

While I value Oregon's cougar population and want it to remain healthy, I also recognize that in some regions, proactive management is needed to protect livestock and help recover our dwindling deer and elk herds. The flexibility of this bill stands out. It respects the will of local voters, who can decide if hound hunting is an acceptable practice. By doing so, counties can address issues before they become emergencies. This measure is not about diminishing cougars; it's about encouraging practical, science-based management.

Thank you for your time and consideration,