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

Testimony in Support of SB 769 – Allowing County-Level Decisions on Cougar Hunting with Dogs

I am writing to express my strong support for SB 769, which proposes to grant individual counties in Oregon the authority to decide on the use of hounds for cougar management. This bill represents a critical step toward localizing wildlife management decisions, empowering communities most affected by cougar populations to have a direct say in the policies that impact their safety, livelihoods, and ecosystems.

Cougar populations have been on the rise across Oregon, leading to increased encounters with livestock, pets, and even humans. These incidents are particularly concentrated in rural counties, where residents live and work in close proximity to cougar habitats. The one-size-fits-all approach currently dictated by statewide measures does not adequately address the unique challenges faced by these communities. It is only fair that the people who experience the direct consequences of these wildlife interactions have a voice in how they are managed.

Allowing individual counties to vote on the use of hounds for cougar hunting ensures that local perspectives are respected, rather than letting urban centers like Portland and the Willamette Valley make decisions for the entire state. Urban residents, while an important part of Oregon's community, are often removed from the realities of rural life and may not fully grasp the complexities of managing large predator populations. The people who live with these challenges every day should be the ones to determine the best course of action for their communities.

Hunting with hounds is a time-tested, effective, and humane method for managing cougar populations. It allows for selective targeting, ensuring that specific problem animals can be removed without negatively impacting the overall population. Additionally, hound hunting significantly reduces the likelihood of wounding, as hunters can make more accurate, ethical shots. This approach aligns with responsible wildlife management principles and respects the balance of our natural ecosystems.

SB 769 is not about imposing a mandate but about restoring the right of local communities to make informed decisions based on their unique circumstances. By supporting this bill, you are advocating for a balanced approach that considers the

voices of all Oregonians, not just those in metropolitan areas.

I urge you to pass SB 769 and allow each county to determine the best management practices for their local cougar populations. Let us respect the diversity of our state by empowering local voters to decide what is best for their communities.

Thank you for considering my testimony.