

Co-Chairs Helm and Owens, members of the Committee,

My name is Matthew Brady. I am a fifth-generation sheep, hay and timber farmer in Azalea, Oregon in rural southern Douglas County. I am asking you today to support House Bill 2403 so that Livestock and Community Protection districts may again be established in communities like my own. I was formerly a member of such a district formed under 2015's House Bill 3188, and utilized the expertise of Wildlife Services regularly to mitigate livestock losses to bear, coyotes, and cougar.

I utilize several non-lethal methods of deterrence on my farm to protect my livelihood from kills by predators such as electric fencing and predator lights. While these are generally effective, that is not always the case, and it is important to have the resource of a local Wildlife Services field agent. These agents can confirm the type of predator killing livestock, as well as provide best methods for additional deterrents, trapping or euthanizing problem animals, in addition to tracking and euthanizing animals themselves.

This was the case in June of 2021 when multiple bear killed 10 mature ewes and lambs from my flock over several days as well as April of 2023 when a cougar killed a dozen lambs in one night. Both of these instances were major financial losses in the thousands of dollars, but also were very discouraging to see animals I've raised from birth torn apart and scattered about my pastures. I relied on local Wildlife Service agents who were funded by a District, as outlined in this bill, to resolve the conflicts with the predators in both cases.

I don't believe in the wholesale slaughter of predator species; they are necessary to a healthy ecosystem. I do believe they are something that need to be stewarded and controlled, as my family has done on my farm for the last 132 years. Please return the mechanism of Livestock and Community Protection Districts to the landowners who rely on them, so that we may have the greatest number of tools in our toolbox to continue feeding our communities and state!



One of multiple mature ewes killed and partially eaten by bear, June 2021





Lambs killed and wasted by a cougar, April 2023