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To: Members of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

From: Rhett Lawrence, Oregon Chapter Sierra Club

Date: February 17, 2015

RE: House Bills 2050 and 2181

Chair Witt and Members of the Committee: Good morning, my name is Rhett Lawrence and I'm the Conservation Director for the Oregon Chapter of the Sierra Club. I'm here testifying on behalf of more than 20,000 members and supporters in Oregon. Thank you for allowing my brief comments today.

The Oregon Chapter has serious concerns about House Bills 2050 and 2181. We believe that these bills are unnecessary and are counter to the will of the voters of Oregon. They are also flawed public policy and would set a dangerous precedent for circumventing state law. However, I would first like to point out that the Sierra Club is decidedly not opposed to hunting and is not "anti-hunter." Our organization has many hunters in our ranks and we have supported and been a part of previous revisions to the state's Cougar Management Plan.

One reason these bills are unnecessary is that ODFW's own numbers show that complaints about cougars to the agency have declined significantly, while the number of cougars killed in the state has increased dramatically. And given the important role that large predators such as cougars play in the ecosystem, we believe their management must be closely monitored so as not to deplete their numbers too far. ODFW already has programs in place for cougar management, so we believe the added measures contemplated by HB 2050 and HB 2181 are not necessary.

Finally, as you all know well, the voters of the State of Oregon have twice spoken on the issue of hunting cougars with dogs and both times have rejected the practice as something which should not be available to the general public. We believe that the will of the voters across the state should be honored, especially when we already have programs in place that we believe are adequate to deal with cougars in our state. Furthermore, allowing counties to opt out of state laws they don't like seems like a very bad idea which would open up all kinds of doors for trouble in the future.

In conclusion, the Oregon Chapter of the Sierra Club believes that House Bills 2050 and 2181 are unnecessary and will ultimately be harmful to our state's wildlife. We urge Committee members to oppose this bill. Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide this testimony.