

MEMORANDUM



TO: Senate Committee on Rules
FROM: Quinn Read, Defenders of Wildlife
DATE: February 25, 2016
RE: Testimony in support of HB 4046 -- Increases damages for unlawful taking or killing of wildlife.

On behalf of Defenders of Wildlife's 18,000 members and supporters across Oregon, we would like to express our strong support for HB 4046, which would increase damages for the unlawful taking or killing of wildlife. Defenders of Wildlife is dedicated to the protection of all native animals and plants in their natural communities. We thank you for holding a hearing and work session about this important matter and submit the following comments for consideration and incorporation into the record.

By increasing monetary and criminal penalties associated with poaching, HB 4046 takes a critical step toward addressing poaching of native Oregon wildlife and deterring activities that fuel the multi-billion dollar illegal wildlife trade. Poaching shows flagrant disregard for our state's wildlife laws and the agencies charged with enforcing them. It also takes already limited resources away from the people who play by the rules and act lawfully with respect to wildlife-based recreation.

Defenders is especially concerned with poaching of our state's native threatened and endangered species -- including gray wolves, which were removed from the list of species protected under the state endangered species act by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission on November 9, 2015. On that same date, ODFW issued a press release that stated:

Commissioners also asked that penalties for unlawfully taking a wolf be increased. Currently, the maximum penalty is a \$6,250 fine and a year in jail and that penalty does not change with the delisting of wolves.

HB 4046 recognizes the request of the Commission by including gray wolves in Section 1 with a penalty that matches those set for black bear and cougar. With fewer than 100 wolves in the entire state, it is critical that we have sufficient penalties in place to deter any illegal taking. While Defenders would like to see penalties for poaching imperiled species -- including gray wolves -- be raised to match those of, for example, moose or mountain goat, we believe HB 4046 is a step forward that honors the request of the Commission.

Defenders of Wildlife supports HB 4046 and any efforts to strengthen anti-poaching laws in Oregon. The measure demonstrates Oregon's continuing leadership in fighting poaching connected to the overseas black market trade in live animals and animal parts by specifically identifying the black bear and cougar parts in highest demand. The measure also affirms Oregon's commitment to supporting comprehensive wildlife management and enforcement of our wildlife laws.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these issues.