

Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR

Sub: Testimony in opposition of SB 769

Date: 02.10.2025

Chair Golden and members of the committee

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name Sristi Kamal, and I am submitting this testimony as a concerned Oregonian and an ecologist, to urge you to reject SB 769 that would allow the use of hounds to hunt cougars in Oregon.

In 1994, the people of Oregon made their voices clear by passing Measure 18, which banned hound hunting for cougars and bears. This decision was not made lightly—it was based on a strong ethical foundation, sound wildlife management principles, and a recognition that Oregon’s ecosystem does not need such an extreme and controversial method of predator control.

Ethical Concerns and Fair Chase

Hound hunting is widely considered unsporting and inhumane. Unlike fair chase hunting, where an animal has a reasonable chance to evade pursuit, hound hunting involves a pack of dogs relentlessly chasing a cougar—sometimes for miles—until it is exhausted and forced up a tree. At that point, the animal is shot at close range, often with no possibility of escape. This practice is not aligned with the values of ethical hunting that many Oregonians hold dear.

Furthermore, this method exposes both wildlife and domestic dogs to unnecessary suffering. The chase alone can cause severe stress to the cougar, leading to muscle damage, heat exhaustion, and even death before a shot is ever fired. Hound dogs themselves are often injured or killed in the process, either by the cougar they corner or by exposure to Oregon’s rugged terrain.

Unintended Consequences for Wildlife Management

Science does not support the claim that hound hunting is needed to control the cougar population. Research shows that removing dominant adult male cougars creates a vacuum, leading to an influx of younger, less experienced males that are more likely to attack livestock or come into conflict with humans. Studies from other states have shown that indiscriminate hunting of cougars can actually increase these conflicts rather than reduce them.

Oregon’s Current System Works

Oregon already has a functioning system for addressing any issue with cougars. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) has the authority to remove cougars that pose a threat to livestock, pets or human safety. This targeted approach is a responsible and science-based alternative to the indiscriminate use of hounds.

Additionally, Oregonians still have legal cougar hunting opportunities. The state issues cougar tags every year, and hunters are permitted to harvest cougars through fair-chase methods. There is no compelling

reason to overturn the will of the voters and introduce a practice that has already been deemed unnecessary and unethical.

Respecting the Decision of Oregon Voters

For 30 years, Oregonians have rejected hound hunting. Every legislative attempt to bring it back has failed because the people of this state do not support it. Overriding the public's decision now would set a dangerous precedent—one where special interest groups can overturn the will of the voters when they do not get the outcome they want.

In closing, I strongly urge this committee to stand with the majority of Oregonians, with ethical hunters, and with science-based wildlife management by rejecting any attempt to reinstate hound hunting of cougars. Our state has already decided that this practice does not belong in Oregon, and nothing has changed to justify reversing that decision.

Thank you

Sristi Kamal