

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

Statement in Support of SB 769

I support SB 769 because it offers a balanced, localized approach to cougar management without imposing a one-size-fits-all policy across Oregon. As someone who was born and raised in this state and has spent my life hunting and fishing here, I've witnessed firsthand the decline of mule deer and elk populations. Studies and field observations suggest that increasing predator pressure—particularly from cougars—has played a role in this decline. Despite thousands of cougar tags being issued annually, actual harvest numbers remain low, indicating that current management strategies are not effectively controlling cougar populations.

By allowing counties to decide whether to permit hound hunting, SB 769 provides a selective, science-based management tool that can be tailored to local conditions. Hound hunting has been used effectively in the past to target problem cougars with precision, reducing conflicts without indiscriminate culling. In rural areas where cougar encounters with livestock, pets, and even people are becoming more frequent, this tool can provide a humane and responsible solution.

I understand concerns about ethical hunting practices, and I firmly believe that any hound hunting permitted under SB 769 must be well-regulated to ensure fair chase principles are upheld. This bill does not mandate hound hunting statewide but rather gives counties the flexibility to use a method that has been proven effective in wildlife management. As a native Oregonian for 58 years who values both conservation and responsible hunting, I believe SB 769 is a necessary step toward maintaining a healthy balance between predator and prey populations in our state.

Sincerely,
Todd Willaman