

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

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for SB 769, which empowers Oregon counties to manage cougar populations in ways that best fit their unique needs. Our state is incredibly diverse, and the challenges posed by cougar populations vary greatly between urban and rural communities. While some areas rarely experience cougar conflicts, others face increasing predation on livestock, declining deer and elk herds, and even sightings near homes and schools.

I live in Otis, near the beautiful coast of Lincoln City. Our community was severely impacted by wildfires several years ago, drastically altering local habitats and wildlife patterns. As natural prey populations shift, cougars are venturing into new areas, increasing risks to livestock, pets, and public safety.

In just the past two weeks, Lincoln City has had four separate cougar incidents within city limits. On two occasions, residents discovered cougar cubs left in backyards in urban neighborhoods. Days before the first cub sighting, a resident witnessed a cougar attack her house cat in her driveway next to the outlet mall. Around the same time, another resident saw a cougar chasing a deer through her yard by the Chinook Winds Golf Course. These alarming incidents highlight the growing presence of cougars in human-populated areas.

Despite issuing thousands of cougar tags annually, Oregon's harvest rates remain low under current restrictions. This underscores the need for more effective and targeted management strategies. Properly regulated hound hunting provides a humane and selective method of relocation and population control, allowing hunters to identify a cougar's sex and maturity before taking action. SB 769 does not mandate hound hunting but simply gives counties the option to allow it if voters choose to do so.

This is not about eliminating cougars—it's about restoring balance and giving local communities the tools they need to manage wildlife responsibly and safely. I urge you to support SB 769 and give our counties the ability to address their unique challenges. Please vote YES on this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jessica Grabenhorst