

Testimony in Support of SB 769 from Rep Bobby Levy

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash, and Members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildlife,

My name is Bobby Levy and I am the State Representative for House District 58, which includes Umatilla, Union, and Wallowa Counties. As one of the chief sponsors of this bill and a lifelong advocate for responsible land and wildlife management, I believe this legislation is a necessary step toward restoring balance in our approach to cougar management in Oregon.

Over the years, our state has seen a significant increase in cougar populations. While these animals are a valued part of our ecosystem, their unchecked growth has led to rising conflicts—more frequent livestock losses, concerns for public safety, and disruptions to other wildlife populations. Current management tools are limited, and without the ability to use trained dogs in a controlled and responsible manner, addressing problem cougars has become increasingly difficult.

SB 769 does not impose a statewide policy but instead puts the decision in the hands of local communities. It allows county voters to determine whether the use of dogs for cougar management is the right choice for their area. This local control is essential because cougar impacts are not the same in every part of the state. Rural communities, where interactions between cougars, livestock, and residents are more frequent, need the flexibility to respond effectively.

Using dogs is a targeted and humane method that allows for the identification and removal of specific problem animals. It reduces the likelihood of indiscriminate killings and ensures a balanced approach to wildlife management. This bill acknowledges that coexistence with predators requires active, science-based management rather than a one-size-fits-all prohibition.

I strongly urge your support for SB 769 to give counties the ability to manage their wildlife in a way that best serves their residents, livestock, and ecosystems. Thank you for your time and consideration.