

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

Chair Golden, Nice Chair Nash, Senator Girod, Senator Prozanski, and Senator Taylor,

I ask for your support of Senate Bill 769.

As a citizen of Umatilla county and lifelong participant of outdoor recreational sports including hiking and hunting, I fully support Senate Bill 769. This bill would return the voice of the people to their local communities for decisions related to protecting local wildlife.

Oregon's current estimated mule deer population sits near 162,000 and should be over 400,000, a staggering 60% below ideal population numbers.

An opposite trend, though, is the cougar population - no coincidence. The Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife currently estimates a cougar population of nearly 7,000 and the maximum population in wildlife management plan caps at 3,000 to best protect the ecosystem. Of the nearly 70,000 tags issued to pursue a cougar in Oregon, only 262 tags were filled with a successful harvest, the poorest success rate of any hunt in the United States.

Hunting is a positive and ethical system for wildlife management - but only if hunters are able to use the best tools to get the job done. The blanket state ban of using dogs for pursuit of cougars allowed for the wrong population to thrive, putting mule deer at risk and throwing the balance of the food chain off kilter.

Senate Bill 769 would allow the citizens of each county in Oregon to make the best local decision for the areas, ecosystems, and wildlife they know best - the areas they live in.

The data shows that our current system is flawed and only appears to continue to decline. The pursuit of cougars using dogs could help Oregonians support mule deer and elk populations by rebalancing the population of cougars in our ecosystems.

Thank you for your service in our legislative process. I appreciate your consideration to support Senate Bill 769.

Best regards,
Kimberly Rill