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The Honorable Thomas Brunner  
500 E. Capitol  
Pierre, SD

Re: Oppose HB 1004: An Act to provide for the killing of mountain lions under certain circumstances and to provide for the disposition of such mountain lions

Dear Representative Brunner:

On behalf of the Cougar Fund and our members in South Dakota I respectfully ask that you vote to oppose HB 1004: An Act to provide for the killing of mountain lions under certain circumstances and to provide for the disposition of such mountain lions. The Cougar Fund, a national nonprofit dedicated to the conservation of the mountain lion throughout its present and historic range, works on behalf of its members to ensure that mountain lion management, as well as management of their prey, are always held to the highest standards of peer-reviewed science. In addition to educating the public about the many issues that surround mountain lions, we look to balance human interests with healthy cougar populations

The Cougar Fund opposes HB 1004 in its entirety on the grounds that, if passed, it would permit and even encourage the killing of mountain lions that pose no real threat to human safety or the safety of livestock, pets or other domestic animals and thus undermine the effective long-term management and conservation of mountain lions in the State. We point out that the South Dakota Game and Fish has also argued that HB 1004 would impede its ability to manage mountain lions in the state.

First, Section 1 of the bill permits any person to kill a mountain lion in situations where an attack on livestock or pets is merely “perceived” rather than “imminent.” Perception is inherently subjective in nature and therefore whether a mountain lion poses a threat

would be subject to broad interpretation. To some, any observed or detected mountain lion could pose a “perceived” threat and could therefore be legally targeted under this bill. Moreover, this language could provide a legal defense for poachers. It is important to note here that Cougar Fund recognizes the right of all citizens to take action necessary for protecting themselves, their families, their friends, and their livestock and pets from harm. We also point out that current State law (SDCL 41-6-29) already provides that mountain lions which are “a threat to the public’s health, safety or welfare or which are doing damage to property” may be killed upon permit from the Secretary of Game, Fish and Parks.

Second, Section 2 allows persons who have killed a mountain lion to keep the carcass even if they do not possess a hunting license. This section of the bill, especially when considered along with the provision of Section 1 noted above, creates further incentive for killing mountain lions that may pose no imminent or real threat to humans, livestock or other domestic animals.

We agree with South Dakota Game and Fish’s stated position that HB 1004 would impede the agency’s ability to manage mountain lions in the state and we respectfully urge you to oppose this bill.

Sincerely,

Sara Carlson  
Director of Programs  
The Cougar Fund

*preserve. protect. balance.*

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