

**TESTIMONY OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE  
  
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND  
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE  
  
IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 1403**

**“An Act to Expand the Hunter Safety Course Exemption for Certain Individuals  
with Firearm Training”**

Representative CRAY of Palmyra. (BY REQUEST)

**DATE OF HEARING: Monday, April 7, 2025**

Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. My name is Emily MacCabe, and I serve as the Director of Public Information and Education at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife speaking on behalf of the Department, in opposition to L.D. 1403.

This bill expands the exemption for certain members of the Armed Forces of the United States from completing a hunter safety course to acquire a hunting license to include all individuals, including veterans and law enforcement officers, who have completed a firearm training course as a requirement of their employment.

Under current law, a member of the United States Armed Forces who is on active duty, permanently stationed outside the country, and home on leave is exempt from the hunter safety course requirements under §11105, subsection 1—provided they show proof at the time of license application that their home state of record, as listed in their military service records, is Maine. Anyone who no longer meets these exemption criteria must comply with the hunter safety certification requirements outlined in subsection 1.

Maine’s hunter education program meets national standards set by the International Hunter Education Association (IHEA) and covers a wide range of topics to ensure hunters are safe, ethical, responsible, and informed about Maine’s conservation efforts and hunting laws. While the course includes basic firearms training—acknowledging the experience recognized by this bill—it also covers critical subjects not typically addressed in standard firearms instruction. These include various hunting scenarios and safety concerns, ethical shot placement, tree stand safety, wilderness survival, navigation, landowner relations, and more. The curriculum also introduces basic knowledge of archery, trapping, and wildlife management to promote a comprehensive understanding of the North American Conservation Model, recognizing that the actions of a single hunter can affect the broader hunting community.

The current law includes an exemption recognizing the challenges active-duty members of the United States Armed Forces often face in accessing a hunter education course while home on leave. A key reason for establishing this exemption was the limited availability of courses during the short window of leave time. However, that obstacle has

been significantly reduced with the introduction of more accessible course delivery methods.

Since 2020, Maine's hunter education program has adopted modern, flexible delivery methods, including a fully online course available to adults aged 16 and older. This self-paced option, which takes approximately eight hours to complete, provides full certification upon completion and meets all standards set by the International Hunter Education Association (IHEA). The accessibility of this format has eliminated many of the traditional barriers, such as scheduling conflicts and geographic limitations. Importantly, the new online course has been widely embraced and appreciated by the public, offering a convenient and effective path to certification for today's hunters.

The Department feels that it is important that hunters fully understand the scope of Maine's conservation efforts and the responsibility to the greater public to ensure that all hunters are knowledgeable, safe, ethical, and lawful in their hunting pursuits.

I would be happy to answer any questions at this time or during the work session.