

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 1050**

**“An Act to Allow an Adult Hunter to Transfer That Hunter's Antlerless Deer
Permit to a Junior Hunter”**

Presented by Representative WOODSOME of Waterboro.

DATE OF HEARING: Monday, March 31, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Nate Webb, Wildlife Division Director at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, in opposition to **L.D. 1050**.

This bill would allow a hunter 18 years or older to transfer their antlerless deer permit to a junior hunter and require the adult hunter to provide supervision of the junior hunter while hunting.

Regulating the harvest of antlerless deer is the primary method used by the Department to manage the state’s deer population. From 1986 to 2021, we used the Any Deer Permit System (ADP) to allocate antlerless deer harvest. While initially an effective management tool, over time this system became mired in complexity and no longer allowed us to meet deer management goals. In response to several bills during the 130th Legislature, this Committee requested that the Department conduct a review of the antlerless deer permit system and work with a group of stakeholders to develop recommendations for how to improve that system.

During the internal review and stakeholder process, we developed a list of recommendations that would improve our ability to meet doe harvest objectives, provide fair and equitable access to antlerless harvest opportunity, not negatively impact buck hunting opportunity, not create major shifts in hunter effort, improve our ability to recruit and retain deer hunters, and generate revenue for deer wintering habitat acquisition and management. With support from this Committee, implementing these recommendations required numerous changes to statute as well as to Department rules and policies, and were closely entwined with concurrent efforts to review and revise statutes related to crossbow hunting and our system for registering big game species.

The ability to swap and transfer antlerless deer permits was deliberately eliminated as part of this overhaul of the system. The removal of transfers and swaps alleviated significant administrative and law enforcement burdens associated with processing permit transfers and swaps and maintaining records of which hunters held permits. Eliminating swaps and transfers was also important to simplify development of systems for electronic self-reporting of harvested big game animals, which we are currently reviewing at the request of this Committee. We do not support reinstituting the permit transfer system.

This bill also states that the transferor may not hunt antlerless deer but shall provide direct supervision to the junior hunter while hunting. This language as proposed may unintentionally restrict current language in regard to “supervision of junior hunters” and create a scenario where only the adult who transferred the antlerless deer permit to the junior hunter would be eligible to supervise that youth.

Youth hunters are an important part of the present and future of hunting, and youth hunters are currently afforded many other benefits with regard to deer hunting in Maine. Hunters under 16 years of age must have a junior hunting license to hunt, which is provided to junior hunters at a reduced cost of \$8. When a junior hunter acquires a junior hunting license, this license also includes muzzleloader, spring and fall turkey, bear, coyote night hunt, pheasant, state migratory waterfowl, one expanded archery antlerless deer permit, and one expanded archery either-sex permit. Youth hunters may hunt deer during the 2-day Youth Hunt, and they may take antlerless deer without a permit during the Youth Hunt as well as the regular archery season. Regarding antlerless deer permits, youth hunters are allotted 25% of the available antlerless deer permits in open districts before the general lottery takes place for that district. If a youth hunter applicant fails to get an antlerless permit from the allotted youth hunter permits in that district, they will be placed in the general lottery and afforded an additional opportunity to be awarded a permit, which affords youth hunters a significantly increased chance of being awarded a permit in the lottery.

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