

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 891**

An Act To Preserve Maine's Hunting Heritage by Expanding Maine Youth Hunting

SPONSORED BY: Senator KEIM of Oxford

CO-SPONSORED BY: Senator DAVIS of Piscataquis, Representatives DRINKWATER of Milford, and MASON of Lisbon

DATE OF HEARING: March 4, 2019

Good afternoon Senator Dill, Representative Nadeau and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Tim Peabody, Deputy Commissioner for the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, in opposition to **L.D. 891**.

This bill authorizes the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to establish by rule 3 consecutive days (Thursday to Saturday) as youth hunting days for bear, and 3 consecutive days (Thursday to Saturday) as youth hunting days for deer.

Currently, youth are afforded special hunting days for deer, bear, turkey and waterfowl. These days typically occur on a Saturday prior to the opening of the regular hunting season for these species. This gives youth hunters an opportunity to hunt without competition from other hunters. On youth deer hunting day, youth hunters can harvest an antlerless deer in any WMD in which any-deer permits are issued, whether or not they have an any-deer permit themselves. We are concerned that in some WMDs, allowing youth to hunt deer for 3 days may result in an excessive harvest of antlerless deer and negatively impact opportunities for other hunters. For bear, we believe the long, 13-week fall season and relatively low hunter participation already allows ample opportunity for youth to pursue this species.

We would like to express our appreciation for the sponsors in looking to increase opportunity for hunting by youths. However, we believe the current youth hunting days already provide excellent opportunities for young hunters. We have tried to remain focused on simplifying our laws and avoid adding complexity. We support and encourage looking at ways to increase the success of youth hunters, but discourage creating conflicts with other hunting opportunities and tempting absence from school as this bill proposes a Thursday to Saturday hunt.

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