

**TESTIMONY OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

**BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND FISHERIES AND  
WILDLIFE**

**IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 929**

**“An Act to Allow Lifetime Hunting and Fishing License Holders to  
Hunt Any Deer as a Part of Their Lifetime License”**

Presented by Representative ADAMS of Lebanon.

**DATE OF HEARING: March 20, 2023**

Good afternoon Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry, 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. 929**.

This bill requires the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife upon application to issue an antlerless deer permit to a holder of a lifetime license to hunt or fish.

There are currently over 100,000 Maine lifetime license holders, and just under 19,000 of the 2022 antlerless deer permit lottery applicants were lifetime license holders. It is unknown how many of the 100,000 license holders would apply for a guaranteed antlerless deer permit if this bill were passed, but it would likely exceed 19,000, perhaps significantly. Based on the number of applicants with lifetime licenses in recent lotteries, it is likely that all of the available permits in WMDs 1-6, 8-14, 18, 19, and 27 would go only to lifetime license holders. In other districts, the percent of permits going to lifetime license holders would vary greatly between ~5% and 75%. In WMDs where lifetime license holders would receive most or all of the available permits, this bill could result in some of the 25% of permits allocated to youth hunters and to landowners no longer being available for those groups. In addition, there would be no permits at all available for ‘regular’ hunters in many WMDs.

In WMDs where the number of applying lifetime license holders exceeded the number of allocated permits, the amount of antlerless harvest opportunity given to lifetime license holders alone would result in antlerless harvests to exceed the Department’s objectives. These situations would primarily arise in the WMDs with limited permit numbers, which are in northern, eastern, and western Maine where our deer populations are the most vulnerable.

Although there is no anticipated administrative cost directly related to this bill, the Department would likely incur significant costs in trying to prevent deer population declines in WMDs that were overharvested as a result of this bill.

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