

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

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

IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 642

**“AN ACT TO PROTECT YOUNG DEER HUNTERS BY PROHIBITING WILD TURKEY
HUNTING DURING YOUTH DEER HUNTING DAY”**

SPONSORED BY: Representative Terry of Gorham
CO-SPONSORED BY: Representative Landy of Farmington
Representative Shaw of Auburn

DATE OF HEARING: March 20, 2023

Good afternoon Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Tim Peabody, Deputy Commissioner at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, in opposition to **L.D. 642**.

This bill proposes to prohibit hunting of wild turkeys during youth deer hunting day. Currently, there are many species that are allowed to be hunted on youth deer hunting day, including wild turkey, ruffed grouse, waterfowl, bear, as well as archery hunting for deer. The Department is not aware of any significant conflicts between youth deer hunters and those hunting for any of these other species or methods. In fact, during the 2022 season, youth hunters killed 1,570 deer, which is just over a 50% increase in youth harvest from the previous 2 seasons and up from a previous 10-year average of 815 deer. Therefore, this bill will unnecessarily reduce hunting opportunity for wild turkeys which could also unintentionally reduce fall harvest of turkeys in WMDs where the Department is trying to stabilize the population. Similarly, if passed as written, this bill could likely result in future requests to prohibit hunting for other species on youth deer hunting day.

While youth-only days provide youth hunters with a unique opportunity to participate in deer hunting with limited competition, safely sharing the outdoors with a variety of other users is a crucial part of the learning experience when becoming a new hunter, fisher, trapper, or wildlife watcher.

Additionally, the department reviewed hunting incidents within the past 10 years and there was no evidence of a single incident resulting from a turkey hunter on youth deer hunting day.

Unfortunately, the Department is unable to provide each user group their own private opportunities in our fields and forests. Instead, we provide appropriate regulations, season frameworks and recreational safety education that promotes and supports safe use of our outdoor spaces. Therefore, the Department does not believe that there is a level of competition between our outdoors users that warrants excluding one user group in favor of another, including youth hunters on special opportunity days.

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