

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

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

IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 458

**“An Act to Require an Application for a Hunting License to Include a Check-off Box
Indicating an Applicant's Wish to Be Entered in the Antlerless Deer Permit Lottery”**

Presented by Senator GUERIN of Penobscot. Cosponsored by Senator: BLACK of Franklin,
Representatives: DILL of Old Town, LANDRY of Farmington, THORNE of Carmel.

DATE OF HEARING: March 13, 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. 458**.

This bill requires a hunting license application to include a check-off box designating whether the applicant wishes to be entered into the antlerless deer permit lottery.

Our understanding is that the intent of this bill is to make it easier for hunters to apply for an antlerless deer permit by giving them an option to do so at the same time they purchase their hunting license. However, while well intentioned we believe that this bill would actually make the deer lottery process more complicated for hunters and reduce overall satisfaction with the lottery process. We begin selling annual hunting licenses in December, but the numbers of antlerless deer permits available in the lottery are not finalized until July. Therefore, if this bill were to pass there would be a risk of hunters applying for deer permits in WMDs in which no permits are ultimately issued, or determining their application strategy without knowing how many permits will be issued in each WMD. Since permit numbers can change dramatically from year to year in response to winter severity and deer population trends, we believe these scenarios would be common and there would be low hunter satisfaction with the lottery process. The Department has a very strong outreach program and we invest significant effort in reminding hunters when the lottery application opens and send multiple reminders as the deadline approaches. We believe the effectiveness of this approach is reflected in the high number of applicants for the 2022 lottery as well as the significant demand for the over-the-counter, leftover permits.

The Legislature and the Department made several significant changes to the antlerless deer permit system in 2022, and it will take a couple of years for hunters to adjust to the changes and become comfortable with the new system. We have identified some relatively minor procedural changes that will make the permit application and purchase process easier for hunters and will implement these adjustments for the fall 2023 hunting season. We are also working on a Department App, which we expect will make the license purchase and lottery application processes much simpler and easier for most hunters.

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