

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

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

IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 1000

**“RESOLVE, TO CONVENE A FIREARM RANGE SAFETY WORKING GROUP WITHIN THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE”**

SPONSORED BY: Representative Roberts of South Berwick

CO-SPONSORED BY: Representative Cluchey of Bowdoinham
Representative Doudera of Cambden
Representative Mastraccio of Sanford

DATE OF HEARING: April 19, 2023

Good afternoon, Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Jim Connolly, Resource Management Director at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, in opposition to **L.D. 1000**.

This resolve directs the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to convene a firearm range safety working group to review firearm range safety and access to firearm safety information in the State. This directive also includes a study to determine if firearm ranges across the state have access to the most current information and standards for safe operations at shooting facilities across Maine. The Department is to report the groups' findings to the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife no later than December 6, 2023.

The Department believes that the formation of a working group of this nature is unnecessary and would cause a significant administrative burden, because national industry standards are readily available for shooting facility managers and the Department provides technical assistance to shooting facilities as part of our Shooting Range Access Improvement project.

The National Rifle Association, National Shooting Sports Foundation, the Archery Trade Association, and US EPA all have resources available to range managers and the shooting public. These resources are considered industry standards and have been fully vetted by experts in range safety, range management, environmental stewardship, and safe firearms use.

In 2012, the Department began developing a comprehensive Shooting Range Access Improvement Program, supported with Pittman-Robertson Grant monies. Under this program, the Department provides multiple public services, which includes providing technical assistance to private and municipal shooting ranges on strategies for lead mitigation, environmental stewardship, as well as range management and safety. Additionally, we periodically provide small sub-grants to private and municipal ranges for projects that improve safety at their range, improve public access, and increase environmental stewardship. To date, the Department has supported 36 separate projects for 17 individual ranges for these improvement projects. These projects, in addition to our modernized state-owned facilities serve as demonstration areas for site-specific examples of techniques implemented to address industry guidelines. Since the inception of the Range Access program, the Department has initiated contact with nearly every non-commercial range in the State.

In addition to the support the Department provides for shooting facilities, we also provide experiential training to the public as part of the Shooting Range program. This hands-on training program is focused on fostering the safe use and handling of firearms and archery equipment to users of all experience levels.

We would like to note that there are several statutes that currently address municipality regulatory authority and civil nuisance rights regarding shooting facilities, as well as unlawful acts associated with the discharge of firearms.

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