

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
IN OPPOSITION TO
L.D. 90**

“An Act to Allow Persons 70 Years of Age or Older to Use a Subpermittee to Harvest Deer”

Sponsored By: Representative STROUT of Harrington.

DATE OF HEARING: February 6, 2023

Good afternoon Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry, 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. 90**.

This bill authorizes a licensed hunter 70 years of age or older to apply for a permit allowing the designation of a subpermittee to harvest deer on the permittee’s behalf. Acting as a designated subpermittee does not limit the subpermittee’s ability to hunt deer pursuant to the subpermittee's own license.

The Department opposes this bill as it brings complexity to our hunting laws at a time when this Committee and the Department have been focusing on simplifying our hunting and fishing laws and rules while providing maximum opportunity for persons to participate.

We have spoken to Representative Strout and understand that she wishes to support aging Maine citizens who do not have the means and or ability to continue hunting. In respect to Representative Strout’s concerns I will summarize some of the opportunities that are currently in law to support hunters that may have physical or financial challenges.

The Department issues approximately 200 permits each year to accommodate hunters with permanent disabilities allowing them to continue to enjoy the sport of hunting as they face physical challenges. A common permit accommodation for persons with ambulatory and respiratory /breathing problems is to allow them to hunt/shoot from a motor vehicle. These permits are issued in addition to other complementary licenses that allow persons with disabilities to hunt and fish.

For persons with financial challenges the Department supports the “Hunters for the Hungry” program which is housed at the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. Illegal game seized by the warden service is often processed and distributed through this program. Hunters who want to donate harvested game meat to the program can do so and help their fellow hunters or neighbors who may not have the ability to hunt.

In addition to this program, the recent changes in the antlerless allows more hunters to take more than one deer in a season this could be another opportunity for a hunter to support a needy/disabled friend or neighbor. Lastly, many local game wardens and dispatch centers have lists of persons who wish to take road killed deer, moose, and bear. This is another option for persons who enjoy game meat and are unable to hunt.

In closing, allowing a deer hunter to have a subpermittee as presented in LD 90 will require additional administrative processes for applications and oversight plus the added field enforcement of the subpermittee model. All of this adds a complexity for the lawful hunters to understand.

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