

To: Chairs Senator Dill, Representative Nadeau, and Members of the IFW Committee:

Good morning Senator Dill, Representative Nadeau, and members of the IFW Committee.

My name is Caitlin Kelty-Huber; I am a resident of Richmond, and was born and raised in Maine. I stand before you today to express my strong opposition to LD 337, an act to create a spring bear hunt.

If LD 337 was sincerely premised upon a desire to curb the ballooning black bear population, it would be titled “an act to prohibit the baiting of bears,” not “to create a spring bear hunt.” To quote from the 2015 study, “Controlling the Black Bear Population,” by researchers at the University of Southern Maine: “The analysis of our simulation runs suggests that adding additional food (in the form of 7 million pounds of bait) increases the bear ecosystem’s natural carrying capacity, and, even with regular adult harvests, the overall black bear population will continue to increase and eventually will exceed its current level (Voyer et al., 2015:12). The paper’s first policy recommendation was to prohibit the baiting of bears, which they also described as the most “ethical solution” (2015:12).

Instead, we are gathered here today to discuss a proposal which would allow bear hunters to target black bears during the vulnerable period after hibernation, specifically putting the lives of nursing sows and their newly born cubs at critical risk. We are assured by proponents of LD 337 that hunters will be capable of ascertaining the sex of bears during a spring bear hunt, but evidence from locales with established spring bear hunts refutes those assurances. For example, over a span of 5 years, 24 bear cubs were discovered orphaned during Ontario’s spring bear hunt. We can only speculate how many more cubs called out for their mothers in vain before succumbing to starvation, predation, and the elements, never to be found. Furthermore, we must reject the notion that this bill would create greater public safety from the artificially inflated bear population. Indeed, bears deemed a “nuisance” or threat to the public are already allowed by law to be removed at any time. Thus, we must conclude that LD 337 is instead premised upon creating greater opportunities for hunters to profit off the suffering and death of bears, and to help expand a practice that is experiencing a steady decline in popularity. Less than 5% of the national population over the age of 16 hunts; half of what it was 50 years ago.

How strange it is to be gathered here today to talk about creating more opportunities to kill wild animals during this time known as the Anthropocene. The impact humans have made globally on ecosystems is decimating endemic populations of wildlife. A 2018 study published in the *Proceeding of the National Academy of Sciences* has shown that human civilization, especially since the advent of animal agriculture and industrialization, has led to the loss of 83% of all wild mammals. The study goes on to reveal that of all mammals on the planet today, 60% are farmed animals, 36% are humans, and only 4% are wildlife. Instead of gathering here to put forward new ways humans may meddle in the lives of other animals, we should be coming together to find solutions to our problematic relationships with wildlife and the environment which has long been centered on human dominance, control, and violence. My generation is leading on this front. We know that logics of domination, like anthropocentrism, impact humans and other

animals, and that violence perpetuated against those who are different than us, even upon species lines, upholds and perpetuates violence amongst humans. As we come in to power, we are changing our systems to incorporate a greater concern for all marginalized groups, including other animals. The future of this department increasingly lies with Mainer's who genuinely connect with our precious Maine landscape through a peaceful, nonconsumptive ethos. Today is a good day for the committee to move in step with us, and reject the egregious and unnecessary suffering of Maine bears by rejecting LD 337.

Thank you,

Caitlin Kelty-Huber
Richmond, Maine