

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

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

IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 1265

“An Act To Control the Means of Hunting Coyotes”

Presented by Senator MIRAMANT of Knox.

Cosponsored by Representative WILLIAMS of Bar Harbor and

Senators: CHIPMAN of Cumberland, VITELLI of Sagadahoc, Representatives: GEIGER of Rockland, MATHIESON of Kittery, MILLETT of Cape Elizabeth, OSHER of Orono.

DATE OF HEARING: May 3, 2021

Good morning Senator Dill, 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. 1265**.

This bill amends the hunting laws by:

1. Removing the hunting exception from the prohibition of allowing dogs at large;
2. Repeals provisions allowing coyote hunting at night and hunting with dogs;
3. Provides for hunting license revocation for the hunting of coyotes at night, with 6 dogs or by the use or placement of bait; and
4. Prohibits the hunting of coyotes by the use or placement of bait or with dogs.

Hunting coyotes with the use of dogs, bait, and at night are all well-established techniques that are commonly used across their range in the U.S. Although we are aware that some Maine residents have expressed concern with these methods, the Department is currently in the midst of an effort to update our coyote management plan, which will include discussion of these issues.

Our coyote management planning effort is part of a larger furbearer planning process and is informed by a scientific survey of Maine residents, hunters, trappers, and landowners; focus group discussions with residents, hunters, trappers, and animal rights advocates; regional public meetings open to the public; and an online discussion forum that allows for additional input from Maine residents and recreationalists. We have established a subcommittee comprised of a diverse suite of stakeholder interests to guide the development of the coyote management plan, and a steering committee to oversee the overall process. These groups will be considering the full spectrum of issues related to coyote management in Maine, including population goals, research and monitoring needs, hunting and trapping methods, and public education. Recommendations from these groups will be documented in a draft plan that will be made available for public comment. Any recommendations for statutory or rule changes identified within the management

plan would still need to go through the corresponding regulatory process, including a public hearing, prior to implementation. We believe this comprehensive planning effort, which we expect to be completed later this year, is a good venue for discussing concerns related to coyote hunting methods.

We would also like to point out by removing the hunting exception from the prohibition of allowing dogs at large, we believe this bill would have broad implications for hunting other species (including upland game, rabbits, bear, and raccoon) with dogs.

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