



# Maine Professional Guides Association

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## Testimony Neither for Nor Against LD 139 Resolve, Directing the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to Establish a Pilot Program for the Electronic Tagging of Deer

Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and distinguished members of the committee, my name is James Cote and I am here today to testify neither for nor against LD 139, Resolve, Directing the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to Establish a Pilot Program for the Electronic Tagging of Deer.

As you know, the management of Maine's deer population, and subsequent deer hunting opportunities, are extremely important to professional Maine guides, our rural economies, and our outdoor heritage.

We thank Senator Bailey for bringing the topic of electronic tagging of deer to light. As technology becomes better equipped to handle this type of task we understand that Maine- and other states- will seek ways to take advantage of it and make things easier for hunters, fishermen, and trappers.

Of critical concern to us is that the integrity of the data that has historically been collected by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (DIFW) is in no way compromised in a transition to electronic tagging. We are proud of the data-collection work that DIFW has done for decades which has resulted in a reputation nationally that Maine has some of the most reliable wildlife harvest data in the country.

Of utmost concern to us is maintaining reliable data for deer in the northern, eastern, and western regions of our state where our deer herd is at higher risk of climate, forest management, winter, predation, and over-harvest impacts. Today, we feel very confident in the State's management and assessment of these impacts, and maintaining the value of the data they collect to inform management decisions is critical.

With that said, we also understand that there may be real value in exploring the benefits of electronic tagging. Our suggestion is to amend LD 139 to direct the Department to report back to this committee next session with a plan for a pilot program, before the Legislature directs them to implement it. Understanding what the pilot program will look like, how much it will cost, who it will impact, what wildlife management areas it seeks to apply to, and how it will protect the integrity of the deer harvest data are all important factors into making the technological capability a long term success. This time for planning will also allow for the Department to solicit feedback from key stakeholders and members of the public, including current tagging stations, who we believe are important stakeholders in the discussion.

Thank you for your consideration and I would be pleased to answer any questions or follow up with additional information as requested.

*An organization of professional guides dedicated to promoting a quality, ethical outdoor experience.*