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LD 716

My name is Nola Prevost, I am a Maine Master Naturalist, a conservation enthusiast and born-and-raised Maine-native, and I am writing in support of LD 716: An Act to Restrict the Hunting of Coyotes.

Coyotes have been in Maine longer than any human civilization, and have been keeping this land in balance. It wasn't until human populations in only the last couple centuries that their numbers have been severely decimated by their exclusion from ethical hunting standards in our regulations. So much so, that it's currently impossible to say with certainty what the coyote population numbers look like because they have not been able to establish a steady healthy population over the last 200 years. LD 716 offers us an opportunity to fix this.

Coyotes are a keystone carnivore species, and they offer more to our ecosystem when they are able to thrive in the wild. They manage the rodent populations as well as sick or weak deer, maintaining healthy populations of herbivores. This not only helps to limit the spread of Lyme disease in the state, but also supports the forest saplings that would otherwise be eaten if deer weren't kept on the move. Establishing a balanced hunting season to protect the coyote pup rearing season in the spring, is one evidence-based way to help the coyotes continue to do their work.

As it stands now, coyotes in Maine are threatened by hunting allowed during their breeding and pup rearing season. And when under stress, coyotes actually produce more offspring, and these young pups when exposed to the trauma of losing their family members in hunting attacks, are more likely to be pressured into situations where they have to go after riskier kills, such as protected livestock or pets. But when they are able to properly raise their young for the full breeding season, the healthy, well-adjusted coyotes don't need to waste their time and energy on our beloved animals and instead are able to subsist off of their natural prey in the wild.

This act will establish a hunting season for coyotes like any other game animal, and with all the work they do to keep our ecosystems in balance, it's the least we can do to start showing the coyotes our gratitude for their role as a keystone carnivore. We all have a responsibility to steward this land that continuously provides for us, humans and animals alike, and that's why I urge you to pass LD 716 so that the coyotes can continue to offer their services to the natural world that we love dearly.