

**Testimony of Simon Thompson
In Support of LD 1293**

April 2, 2025

Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife:

My name is Simon Thompson, I live in Portland, and I am here to testify in support of LD 1293.

In 2005, when these killing contests began, then-Governor Baldacci and many of our legislators did not endorse them, expressing concern that they didn't square with Maine's hunting traditions and conservation ethics. Those concerns have not gone away.

These contests were created by private hunting groups after the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife abandoned the controversial snaring program in 2003. Small "derbies" were held for the next decade or so until they essentially consolidated into two primary events run by the Penobscot County Conservation Association and the Aroostook County Conservation Association, holding contests from 2009 to the present. The Penobscot event is held in Springvale from mid-December to the end of March. The Aroostook event is held from mid-October to mid-February. Both charge a \$20 entry fee and offer cash and other prizes.

These derbies or tournaments are increasingly being banned by states around the country. Participants are typically rewarded with cash prizes, weapons, or other incentives for killing coyotes such as the biggest, the most, or the most by different methods, during an established time period. They only serve to perpetuate a culture of violence and send a message that wild animals have little intrinsic value and are disposable.

Promoted as "wildlife management" programs, these contests are conducted for profit, entertainment, and the "fun" of killing. They are often sponsored by hunting outfitters and hosted in places like restaurants and bars. Private hunting groups have evolved to fill the desire to find ways to kill coyotes, including sponsoring and funding these contests. Interestingly, they operate without the official endorsement of the Maine Department of IF&W.

SAM News reports that over the last 15 years, the Penobscot event has averaged 143 kills per year and the Aroostook event averaged 135, for a total of 278 animals. Over and above the fact that these coyote losses will be replaced quickly, it is estimated there are around 15,000 coyotes in the state. Thus the coyotes taken during these derbies represent just under 2% of the entire population. To call it an effective wildlife management tool is false, and to this point, you would think the question should be, are the small amount of animals taken worth the public relations black eye it gives all Maine hunters? You would think with hunting numbers down in recent years, why bring that criticism?

This is not another bill about coyote management, it is about a specific practice that has no place in “wildlife management”, and for that matter, in modern civilized society. The risk for the hunting community would seem to be unnecessary given their dubious value especially and with more and more states banning or looking to ban such practices.

I thank you for listening to my testimony and will try to answer any questions the committee might have.

Simon Thompson
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