



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## **Benjamin C. Hymes**

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Good afternoon Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. I am State Representative Benjamin Hymes of Waldo, and I am proudly serving my first term in the Maine House representing the folks of Brooks, Jackson, Knox, Monroe, Swanville, Thorndike, Unity, Waldo and Frankfort in District 38.

I am pleased to be here today to present LD 305, *An Act to Provide Youth Lifetime Hunting Licenses to Eligible Dependents of Veterans Who Are 100 Percent Disabled*.

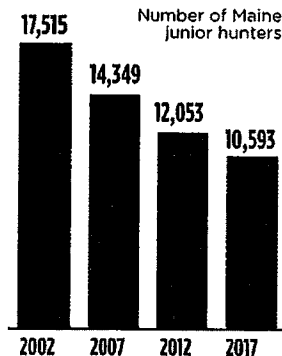
I stand before you today as a recently retired Veteran that served 20 honorable and faithful years in the United States Navy. The impact of that service on both my family and me was immense, most notably during my 12 combat deployments to both Iraq and Afghanistan. However, now that I am retired, one of the most powerful remedies for those impacts is spending time with my children. This past fall, for the first time, I finally had the privilege to spend time with my oldest son Everett on his first deer hunt. This was immensely fulfilling and therapeutic for the both of us. Having missed the early years of his life for my deployments, he and I am thoroughly convinced that this will be a tradition for many years to come.

My bill is very straightforward. It pairs our disabled veterans with their children for a lifetime of healing and recovery. Both disabled veterans and their children would benefit from this small gesture to allow them a lifetime of quality outdoor adventures together.

Youth hunting is on a steep decline and according to the attached graphic from the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife it is at a rate of decline of 40%.

## Maine youth hunters

Maine junior hunting license sales have steadily declined over the past 15 years. Between 2001 and 2017, the most recent year for which the state has data, the license sales decreased a steep 40 percent.



SOURCE: Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife  
STAFF GRAPHIC | MICHAEL FISHER

Additionally, I would like to highlight the positive effects being outdoors and spending time with family can have on Veterans.

Researchers from the University of Utah and Westminster College in Salt Lake City found that participation in outdoor recreational activities could help veterans with mental health issues, such as post-traumatic stress, anxiety and depression (1)

"The physiological response to being outside in nature is real, and it's measurable," said Michelle Kondo, a research social scientist with the USDA Forest Service's Northern Research Station. "There are many physical and psychological benefits of nature that scientists have observed which can better help us understand how nature supports wellness in the body, mind and community." (2)

I would like your support on this bill to help Veterans and their children reconnect, heal and share a lifetime of outdoor memories together.

Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions.

(1) <https://www.sierraclub.org/articles/2022/06/vfw-magazine-outdoor-activities-improve-vets-mental-health>

(2) <https://www.fs.usda.gov/features/wellness-benefits-great-outdoors#:~:text=Studies%20also%20show%20that%20being,risk%20factors%20for%20cardiovascular%20disease.>