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Senate District 15*

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TESTIMONY OF SENATOR MATTHEW POULIOT

Sponsor of LD 271

“An Act Requiring the University of Maine System and the Maine Community College System to Offer a For-credit Course on Hunting, Fishing Recreational Shooting and Trapping”

Public Hearing: March 6, 2023

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural. I am Senator Matt Pouliot and I represent Senate District 15, which includes the towns of Augusta, Belgrade, China, Mount Vernon, Sidney and Vassalboro. I am here to present my bill LD 271 “An Act Requiring the University of Maine System and the Maine Community College System to Offer a For-credit Course on Hunting, Fishing Recreational Shooting and Trapping.”

This bill is pretty straightforward, it requires the University of Maine System and the Maine Community College System to offer a for-credit course where students will learn about hunting, fishing, recreational shooting and trapping. This idea came from a conference I attended and I heard about other state University Systems implementing it with success. I believe currently there is a program like this offered through University of Maine at Fort Kent, and I know some local technical centers, such as Mid-Maine Tech, offer courses in outdoor education, but this bill seeks to make the offering more widely available.

We have many students from out of state and from Maine who attend our college systems in Maine each year who have never experienced all that the Maine outdoors has to offer. According to a 2022 U.S. Department of Commerce’s Bureau of Economic Analysis, Maine outdoor recreation generated \$2.8 billion in total economic output in 2022 and with the help of our college systems, we could be promoting it even further. Giving students exposure to training like this is critical to helping them understand the North American model of herd management.

I was fortunate to grow-up in a family and be introduced to hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation but that is not the case for everyone. Some kids never have this opportunity because their parents may be too busy working or they grow up in a home where these opportunities do not exist. A program like this would help expose more students to responsible stewardship of our wildlife population. It is also a way for students to explore other career opportunities, with many Maine guide services earning enough money to support themselves and family, or at least supplement their income around various hunting seasons.

In closing, I see this legislation as a common sense bill to promote the Maine outdoors through our post-secondary education systems. Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions.

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