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Testimony of Tom Doak
Deputy Executive Director
Maine Woodland Owners

In Support of
LD 614

"An Act to Provide a Free Antlerless Deer Permit to Certain Landowners Who Allow the Public to Hunt on Their Property"

Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, my name is Tom Doak, I am the Deputy Executive Director of Maine Woodland Owners speaking today in support of LD 614, "An Act to Provide a Free Antlerless Deer Permit to Certain Landowners Who Allow the Public to Hunt on Their Property."

This bill amends the law to provide an antlerless deer permit at no cost for all eligible landowners who apply for a permit and keep their lands open to hunting by the public.

In the statute as it currently reads, an antlerless deer permit lottery adopted by the commissioner may include a provision giving special consideration to landowners who keep their lands open to hunting by the public. As part of the special consideration, the commissioner is required to provide at least 25% of the available antlerless deer permits in a wildlife management district to eligible landowners that apply for an antlerless deer permit in that district. The landowners, like all others, are currently required to pay \$12 for that antlerless deer permit.

We support the idea that landowners who keep their land open to the public for hunting deserve special consideration in the antlerless deer lottery, but we propose a change to this bill as drafted.

We propose that the bill retain the current statute's lottery system with the commissioner providing at least 25% of the available antlerless deer permits in a district to eligible landowners. However, we suggest that the \$12 fee be waived for those landowners selected in the lottery. Under this scenario, only those landowners not selected in the landowner lottery and who are entered back into the regular antlerless deer permit lottery would be subject to the fee.

We believe this approach strikes the right balance between rewarding landowners who open their land to the public by providing them an opportunity to win a free permit in the lottery, and recognizing that the fees collected by the Department of Inland

Fisheries and Wildlife through the sale of antlerless permits are a critical source of funding for the Maine Deer Management Fund. This fund is used in part for the purchase and management of deer wintering areas primarily in northern Maine.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our view on this bill. I'd be happy to try and answer any questions now or at the work session.