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**LD 716 "An Act to Restrict the Hunting of Coyotes"**  
**Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife**  
**March 3, 2025**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and members of the committee, I am Trey Stewart; and I represent Senate District 2 that includes many communities in Aroostook and Penobscot counties. I am here today to testify in strong opposition to LD 716, "An Act to Restrict the Hunting of Coyotes" and I ask for you to vote against this misguided legislation.

We've been here before. Attempts to restrict the hunt of what is perhaps Maine's greatest predator was as recent as two years ago through LD 814, which was soundly rejected by a majority of this committee and the House of Representatives. From then to now, nothing about the science of how we manage the Eastern Coyote population has changed. Let's talk about that science.

We know the Eastern Coyote is a hybrid of its Western cousin. Taxonomy of its DNA indicates the coyotes found here in Maine and across the northeast owe their larger size and aggressiveness to DNA from timber wolves, gray wolves and even domestic dogs. This animal is taller, stronger, faster and adaptable to nearly every environment.

I can best describe the Eastern Coyote as nature's perfect hunter-killer, a naval term used to describe highly effective attack submarines. The Eastern Coyote is a bolder, more aggressive, and highly efficient predator compared to its Western counterpart – all due to its wolf heritage. Nature has a way of selecting the best genetics to survive over the long term. The Eastern Coyote is one such example.

What that means is our coyote population has no natural predators. In fact, it is the apex predator for our region that leaves only humans as its means of control. The science of natural order tells us the coyote is nothing to be feared. Coyotes are our means of control for other species like fox, which do not live in areas inhabited and dominated by a den of coyotes.

And let's not forget that foxes are also predators in their own right that control lower order animals as part of a hierarchy that creates a natural balance that fills what would otherwise be a void. We all know nature abhors a void.

Yet we also know we need to protect some animals from depredation. We have strived to protect our white-tail deer population and spent a good amount of resources on protecting deer wintering areas – what we call deer yards – through forest management. We carefully calculate exactly how many antlerless permits to issue each year based on the health of the deer herd.

*132<sup>nd</sup> Legislature*  
*Senate of*  
*Maine*  
*Senate District 2*

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This same balance applies to moose as well as coyotes. We don't want too many, as that will upset the balance of the ecosystem as it applies both up and down the animal kingdom. Nor do we want too few as that may lead to an overabundance of deer, fox and other furbearing and game animals. It's a matter of competition for scarce resources and the overall health of a population that is determined by the size of it.

That's the science, so let's move on to the practices we employ to prevent depredation. And when I say depredation, this includes Maine's livestock, domestic animals and crops.

We have a standing practice of holding special moose hunts to avoid the depredation of broccoli and other crops up north. This helps keep Moose at a level that is sustainable yet controlled to prevent too much destruction of our vital crop fields.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recognizes this as an invaluable tool to control predator populations. Losses of cattle, sheep, goats and other wildlife has been measured at the national level. Coyotes account for 40 percent all cases of depredation when it comes to cattle, and more than 30 percent for sheep and goats. However, that balloons to more than 53 percent for calves and 65 percent for lambs and kids, all of which are far more vulnerable to such predators.

It's no different for deer. The current hunting months of December until August cover the most vulnerable time for fawns, and hunting during this period helps protect them until they develop more fully by the fall to at least have a chance for survival.

That is why the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, what we call APHIS, specifically recommends the practices hunting through the use of a call and doing so at night in its Wildlife Damage Management guide. As I mentioned, this is an apex predator – the craftiest of all animals in Maine.

I urge you to follow the wisdom of this committee in the 131st and reject this legislation outright. Do it for nothing more than the science behind it, science that the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife not only understands but also puts into full practice in everything they do.

Thank you.