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Testimony of Tom Doak

Executive Director

Maine Woodland Owners

In Support of

LD 866

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

Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, my name is Tom Doak, I am the Executive Director of Maine Woodland Owners speaking today in support of LD 866, "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, and receive, a permit and keep their lands open to hunting by the public.

In the statute as it currently reads, an antlerless deer permit lottery includes 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. These landowners currently receive little or no benefit for making their land available to the

public for hunting, or any other public use. And, while a free antlerless deer permit only benefits landowners who are deer hunters, it is a start.

We support the current statute's lottery system providing at least 25% of the available antlerless deer permits in a district to eligible landowners along with the provisions in this bill which waves the \$12 fee for those landowners selected in the lottery.

This bill also provides a waiver of the \$12 fee for those same landowners who are not selected in the lottery, but acquire a permit by other means. While we support this provision too, we recognize that it may be administratively difficult to implement. We would support the bill even if this provision is removed.

We believe this bill strikes the right balance between rewarding landowners who open their land to the public by providing them an opportunity to win a free antlerless deer permit, and recognizing that the fees collected by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, through the sale of these 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.