

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST L.D. 1293**

“An Act to Prohibit Coyote-Killing Contests in Maine”

Presented by: Senator BEEBE-CENTER of Knox.

Cosponsored by Representative DODGE of Belfast and
Senators: BRENNER of Cumberland, LAWRENCE of York, RAFFERTY of York,
Representatives: BOYER of Cape Elizabeth, FRIEDMANN of Bar Harbor, KUHN of
Falmouth, PUGH of Portland.

DATE OF HEARING: Wednesday, April 2, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Nate Webb, Wildlife Division Director at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, neither for nor against **L.D. 1293**.

This bill would prohibit coyote killing contests and provides that a person that knowingly arranges or takes part in a coyote killing contest would be committing a Class E crime.

Maine’s regulations for coyote hunting are similar to most other states, which typically allow year-round hunting opportunities. Coyotes are a popular furbearer species to pursue but can be challenging to harvest.

Coyote management in general is often controversial, but predator killing contests can be particularly contentious and viewed from widely different perspectives. These viewpoints range from contests being a legitimate management tool for improving the survival of game species, to the perspective that contests portray hunting in an unethical way, or that they devalue important public wildlife resources. The Department recognizes these differing viewpoints, and we have heard from many of Maine’s citizens regarding coyote-killing contests. This input has been very mixed with roughly an even split in support or opposition of these contests.

Maine has a long history of big buck contests and ice-fishing derbies sponsored by local businesses or area Fish and Game clubs, and sometimes a portion of the registration fees go to charitable donations or fund other conservation efforts. Although there are some restrictions for fishing derbies, there are no current restrictions on competitive contests where participants enter for cash or other prizes for harvesting wildlife, including for coyotes.

Since this is such a controversial subject, the Department would like the committee to consider the following: coyotes are abundant and well distributed in Maine, and regulated coyote hunting and trapping follows biological principles. If coyote contests are held, they must follow all applicable hunting or trapping regulations by all participants. We are currently aware of 3 such contests and to our knowledge these contests have not resulted in a high number of participants nor high harvest of coyotes, which supports prior research that shows very little evidence that killing contests successfully control predator populations.

I would be glad to answer any questions at this time or during the work session.