



MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002
(207) 287-1440
TTY: (207) 287-4469

April 9, 2025 - Testimony in support of LD 1343:

"An Act to Protect the Right to Harvest Wildlife"

Good afternoon Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and members of the Joint Standing Committee On Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Representative Billy Bob Faulkingham, and I serve as the House Republican Leader. I represent House District 12, which includes the towns of Franklin, Gouldsboro, Hancock, Sorrento, Sullivan, Winter Harbor, and Steuben. I'm here to speak in support of LD 1343 – ***"An Act to Protect the Right to Harvest Wildlife."***

I strongly believe that this legislation is a necessary step in safeguarding the long-standing tradition of harvesting wildlife through hunting, fishing, and trapping here in Maine. The cultural heritage of our state is deeply rooted in these activities, and this bill affirms the right of the people of Maine to continue to engage in these practices, subject to reasonable regulations.

Maine has a rich history of hunting, fishing, and trapping that dates back centuries. For many of us, these activities are not just pastimes—they are integral to our way of life. Hunting and fishing have been passed down from generation to generation and are essential elements of Maine's identity. They connect us to the land and waters of our state and provide both sustenance and an important cultural bond.

The right to harvest wildlife is recognized in the **Constitution of Maine, Article I, Section 25**, which affirms the right to food. Specifically guaranteeing that, ***"all individuals have a natural, inherent and unalienable right to food, including the right to save and exchange seeds and the right to grow, raise, harvest, produce and consume the food of their own choosing for their own nourishment, sustenance, bodily health and well-being, as long as an individual does not commit trespassing, theft, poaching or other abuses of private property rights, public lands or natural resources in the harvesting, production or acquisition of food."***

LD 1343 ensures that this right is preserved and upheld for future generations, securing Maine residents' ability to continue engaging in these activities for their sustenance, health, and well-being.

The economic impact of hunting, fishing, and trapping in Maine cannot be overstated. Hunting and fishing contributes billions annually to Maine's economy. This includes spending on equipment, licenses, travel, and lodging. These activities support thousands of jobs in rural areas and throughout the state, from small businesses to outfitters to guides.

In Maine, wildlife harvesting also plays a key role in managing wildlife populations and maintaining the balance of natural ecosystems. For example, regulated hunting and trapping help control overpopulated species like white-tailed deer and certain predator species, preventing negative impacts on forest regeneration, agricultural crops, and other wildlife.

Without responsible management through hunting, fishing, and trapping, we risk ecological imbalances that could harm not only wildlife but also the health of our forests, rivers, and lakes. This bill recognizes the importance of these activities in the biological management of natural communities and ensures that we continue to engage in science-based, sustainable wildlife stewardship practices.

LD 1343 makes it clear that the people of Maine have the right to harvest wildlife, provided they adhere to laws and regulations that are already in place to ensure sustainable practices. This bill does not alter the existing regulatory framework but rather reinforces the fundamental right of Maine citizens to engage in these activities. It ensures that the cultural, economic, and biological benefits of wildlife harvesting remain a cornerstone of our state's identity and prosperity.

In conclusion, I urge this committee to support ***LD 1343 – “An Act to Protect the Right to Harvest Wildlife.”*** Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Billy Bob Faulkingham".

Rep. Billy Bob Faulkingham
House Republican Leader