

April 28, 2025

Good afternoon Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts and members of the IF&W committee. I am MaryAnne Kinney of Knox (where cows outnumber people) and am submitting testimony in **support of LD 1692 An Act Regarding Antlerless Deer Permits for Certain Agricultural Landowners.**

Just before cloture for this session, I reached out to a few legislators to submit this bill and Representative Tuell was gracious enough to respond to my request. Representative Foster has submitted a similar, though broader bill, LD 866 which I understand will have another work session this Wednesday along with this one. I support either bill, recognizing that they are similar but not exactly the same. I appreciate that this bill is specific to landowners who use their land for agricultural purposes being eligible for an antlerless permit obtained through the landowner lottery to have the first permit at no cost. Bonus or other additional permits obtained through the IF&W website would be subject to the \$12 cost. This group of landowners (farmers) have the opportunity to obtain a nuisance permit for wildlife if crops are damaged due to nuisance deer and other wildlife at no cost by working with the department. However, many farmers in this state wait for the appropriate season to hunt in order to protect the herd for years to come. My family are such farmer hunters. We understand the research that wildlife biologists have done to determine the best time of year to have a hunting season on these animals. We also have a large amount of wildlife that do damage to our and our neighbors' crops. Most farms have a great deal of land where these wildlife live and thrive. Providing wintering yards that the fees are meant to establish on their dime. Having the first antlerless permit without the upfront cost (intended to create and maintain wintering yards) would be beneficial to our agricultural landowners in Maine. Our state is unique in that 94% of Maine land is privately owned. Hunters rely on the generosity of landowners opening their land for the recreation (and in some cases, necessity) to hunt for food. I hope this committee can see the benefit of offering free permits to agricultural landowners in return for the benefit of all who enjoy their time hunting for food. Damage from hunters is also an increasing issue for agricultural landowners so I agree we should only allow permits at no cost to those who keep their land open to other hunters.

I have noticed a few bills that involve changing who qualify for landowner permits in general so if you are looking for ways to test or limit this proposal, I highly recommend restoring the no cost program to Maine farmers.

Thank you for your consideration, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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