

LD 2054 – Neither for Nor Against (With Clarifications)
An Act to Clarify the Laws Regarding Moose Hunting Permits for Hunting Outfitters

Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and members of the committee, my name is Jason House and I am here on behalf of the Maine Sporting Camps Association (MSCA). I am the Vice President of MSCA and the owner and operator of Macannamac Camps. I also serve on the Maine Professional Guides Association, Maine Forest Products Council, and Sportsman's Alliance of Maine Boards of Directors; however, I do not speak on behalf of those organizations today.

Based on the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife's public comments, LD 2054 is intended as a placeholder bill to clarify laws related to Hunting Outfitter (HO) moose permits. I am here to express MSCA's strong support for the Hunting Outfitter program.

As many of you may recall, this program was originally implemented to provide economic support for traditional sporting camps that were severely impacted by the devastating winters of 2009–2010 and the resulting decline in the white-tailed deer population in northern Maine. During that period, sporting camps experienced a significant drop in November deer-hunting business directly tied to herd losses. In response, the HO lodge tag program was created to help offset those losses by allowing camps to market Maine's world-class moose hunting opportunities.

While it has been 10 years since an economic impact study has been conducted, anecdotal evidence from sporting camps indicates strong and sustained interest. The program clearly generates millions of dollars annually for the State of Maine. Beyond direct revenue to camps, each hunt requires the use of registered Maine Guides and includes lodging and meals. Additional economic benefits extend to meat processing, fuel purchases, restaurants, taxidermy, and other local services—demonstrating that the economic impact reaches far beyond the camps themselves.

In short, the Hunting Outfitter program was designed to support Maine's traditional sporting camps, and it continues to achieve that goal.

Regarding specific provisions of the bill, MSCA does not support subsection 14D. Hunters should retain the ability to request a permit deferment for legitimate reasons such as serious medical events or the death of an immediate family member. Eliminating this option would be inconsistent with the flexibility allowed under traditional lottery permits. The reputational harm to the State—should a hunter in intensive care be denied a deferment—is simply too great.

MSCA does support subsection 14H. The Association does not support the sale of Subpermittee or Alternate Subpermittee designations.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.