

Sharon Flannery, Owner, Wilderness Escape Outfitters, Danforth ME

**Testimony in Opposition of LD 544**

**An Act to Eliminate Moose Permits for Hunting Lodges**

**To**

**The Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife**

**March 15, 2021**

My husband Randy and I own and operate Wilderness Escape Outfitters in Danforth ME.

The argument that this is a money grab for the “haves” and leaves the “have nots” out in the cold is ridiculous. I believe everyone has the same opportunity that we did, more so now with the possibility (if they get licensed) of receiving a Hunting Camp Moose Tag and recouping some of the expenses to build or upgrade their business.

I believe strongly in this because we were one of the “have nots” when we started our business. My husband was a guide for hire and guided for other outfitters.

Before buying our land in Northern Maine we lived in an old two bedroom trailer on a small piece of land and drove a twenty something year old car and truck. We stepped out in faith, sold our trailer and land, and with the little money we made on the sale we invested it into our land in Northern Maine.

We were turned down by four banks before finding one that would give us a loan to build. Because of the cost of labor we built our place ourselves. My husband and I, our 13 year-old son, and 9 year-old daughter. We lived in a small camper on our property with no running water for two years. We bathed in the lake, cooked on a gas grill and built our lodge.

We had very very little when we began. We started this place from scratch with our blood, sweat, and tears. We struggled for the first 15 years of our business but with a lot of sacrifice, we made it work. This is why I don't believe in this “haves” and “have nots” because again, I believe that everyone has the same opportunity that we did if they're willing to work hard, build their business and do things by the book..

We outfitters who have our whole lives and every penny we own invested into our businesses deserve to be considered differently than the guide working out of a tent or pickup truck. We have the extra and overwhelming expenses of running our businesses. We hire guides, kitchen, cleaning and maintenance staff, and in the beginning (and even now) we were all of these things. We pay taxes and insurance. We get inspected and are regulated so we are a good representation for Maine. The lodge moose permit is helping us grow our business so we can bring more clients and revenue into the state.

I understand that the bill may need some adjustments, but don't get rid of the whole bill just because of a few adjustments, straighten them out

Thank you for your time,  
Sharon Flannery