

**TESTIMONY OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE  
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND  
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE  
IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 1012**

**“An Act To Fund Wildlife Rehabilitators”**

**Presented by:** Representative FAY of Raymond.

**DATE OF HEARING: April 7, 2021**

Good morning Senator Dill, Representative Landry and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Jim Connolly, Resource Management Director at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking in opposition to **L.D. 1012**.

This bill creates a new project category for natural resources agencies that are applying for a grant from the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund [MOHF]. The new category is wildlife rehabilitation and includes criteria for the board to take into account when considering and awarding grants to projects under that category. The new category represents 10% of available annual grant money, reallocating funding from 2 other existing categories. This is accomplished by reducing Fisheries and Wildlife; habitat conservation from 35% to 30% and reducing Endangered and Threatened Species from 15% to 10%.

While the Department recognizes the service that the wildlife rehabilitators provide to the citizens and wildlife of the State, the Department has several concerns with this bill:

1. Currently there is not enough money in the program to fund all the worthy projects that are submitted during each round. The MOHF program began funding projects in 1996 and since then there has been a decline in the amount of available funding as the number of competing lottery scratch tickets has increased. Currently, many deserving projects in these categories are not funded, and the proposed reallocation of funds would only increase that number.
2. Wildlife Rehabilitation projects are currently eligible to be funded in Category 1- Fisheries & Wildlife, habitat conservation and historically have been. Since the program began there have been 15 requests for funding wildlife rehabilitation projects; of these, 9 received funding. Moving the funding to a separate category is not an assurance more projects would be funded.
3. The Department feels that the current categories adequately capture the priorities established by the MOHF statute. Reducing money available for fish and wildlife habitat conservation and endangered and threatened species work to create a special category focused on wildlife rehabilitation will result in an overall reduction in high value conservation work being funded. Currently the wildlife rehabilitation facilities that work with endangered, threatened and special concern species can apply for and do receive funding. In contrast, the majority of wildlife rehabilitation facilities work on common species such as squirrels, woodchucks, raccoons and chipmunks. While this work is

important, we do not feel that reallocating MOHF money is an appropriate way to fund that work.

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