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LD 1033, “An Act To Allow Sunday Hunting on Private Property with the Written Permission of the Landowner”

**Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
April 21, 2021**

Senator Dill, Representative Landry and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife:

I am Jeff Timberlake, a farmer and landowner; and I represent Senate District 22, which includes the Towns of Durham, Greene, Leeds, Lisbon, Litchfield, Sabattus, Turner, Wales, and Wayne. It is my pleasure to be here to present LD 1033, “An Act To Allow Sunday Hunting on Private Property with the Written Permission of the Landowner.”

As someone who owns land and makes a living off that land, this bill strikes the appropriate balance between landowners in Maine, outdoor enthusiasts and hunters.

Working Mainers and their families are counting on you to consider and pass LD 1033. I know what a hard day’s work means; and for most Mainers a hard day’s work is required five or six days a week. That leaves blue-collar hunters with sometimes only two or three days a year to hunt. Anyone who has ever hunted knows that two or three days is usually not enough to be successful. This bill will empower those hard workers to hunt on their land or ask permission of a landowner to hunt on Sundays. Adding Sunday could double the season of some hunters. Ironically, the same people who would benefit most from a successful harvest are the ones who are forced to choose between working overtime on Saturday and getting out in the woods. We can do better for them.

Maine and Massachusetts are the only two states left in the nation with a complete ban on Sunday hunting. The basic premise of this bill is recognizing that individuals should have the right to hunt their own property on Sunday and the right to grant permission to do so.

It is important to note this bill does not infringe on the rights or safety of other outdoor recreationalists. This bill applies only to private property. Hunting would still be prohibited on public land. Hunting remains a very safe activity for hunters and non-hunters. It is safer than boating, in fact. In the last 30 years there have been three non-hunter deaths due to hunting. Between 2015 and 2019 ten people were killed in boating accidents, a yearly average for that timeframe of two per year. As a non-hunter, you are safer in the woods with hunters than you are

on the water in a boat. (<https://www.uscgboating.org/library/accident-statistics/Recreational-Boating-Statistics-2019.pdf>)

Maine has seen a decline in the number of licensed hunters over the past decade. This decline is, in part, due to a transition in family lifestyle that is filled with commitments throughout the week. Between school, work and extracurricular engagements, many do not have an adequate opportunity to participate in hunting. Engaging Maine's youth is the only way we will preserve Maine's hunting heritage for future generations. It is critical that we get kids involved to increase hunter participation while teaching responsible and safe hunting habits.

Because Maine has seen a decline in the number of licensed hunters, it has also been trouble for Maine's harvest counts for deer and black bear. Maine has been increasing the numbers of Any-Deer permits yearly and promoting bear hunting. This fact is why Sunday hunting will not shorten the deer season. On the contrary, it will help the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Department manage our herd.

In addition, Maine faces significant budgetary challenges as a result of COVID-19. Expanding Sunday hunting opportunities will also provide economic benefits through the purchase of licenses, fuel, food, lodging and dozens of incidentals that go along with a day's hunt. According to an economic impact study done by the National Shooting Sports Foundation, the total economic impact to Maine would be 1,877 jobs and an economic output of tens of millions of dollars if Sunday hunting were allowed.

Finally, allowing landowners to choose to hunt on their land on Sundays, as well as give others permission to hunt on their land, promotes the rights of property ownership. The government should not arbitrarily regulate what days people can do specific activities on their own land, as long as those activities are otherwise approved by law. We have an opportunity this session to pass a meaningful piece of legislation that will touch the lives of countless Mainers and put our state in line with nearly every other one in the nation. I urge you to vote on the side of working Mainers, small businesses and our ever-important youth hunters. I urge you to pass LD 1033.

Thank you for your time and consideration.