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Hunting coyotes year-round in Maine is crucial for several reasons, including ecological balance, agricultural protection, and public safety. Here is a testimony supporting the practice:

#### Importance of Year-Round Coyote Hunting in Maine

As a resident of Maine and someone who understands the delicate balance of our local ecosystems, I strongly support the ability to hunt coyotes year-round. This practice is not only essential for maintaining the health of our environment, but it also helps to protect our agriculture and safeguard the safety of our communities.

The ecological balance; Coyotes are a versatile and adaptive predator that can thrive in a wide range of environments. However, when their populations are left unchecked, they can disrupt local ecosystems by preying on smaller wildlife, including vulnerable species and livestock. Coyotes are known to outcompete other predators, causing an imbalance in predator-prey dynamics. Year-round hunting helps prevent overpopulation, which can have negative ripple effects throughout the food chain, preserving biodiversity in Maine's forests and fields.

Agricultural protection, Maine's farmers and ranchers face constant threats from wildlife, and coyotes are no exception. These predators often target livestock, including chickens, sheep, and calves. By allowing year-round hunting, farmers and ranchers can take proactive measures to protect their animals, reducing economic losses and the potential for harm to valuable livestock. Without year-round hunting, coyotes can breed and multiply at a rate that makes them increasingly difficult to manage during certain seasons.

As coyotes become more accustomed to urban and suburban areas, the risk to pets and even humans increases. There have been reports of coyotes becoming more bold in seeking food sources near homes, schools, and parks. Year-round hunting would allow for more consistent management of these animals, reducing the chances of human-wildlife conflict and minimizing potential attacks on pets, particularly small dogs and cats. In addition, removing excessive coyote populations can reduce the transmission of diseases such as rabies, which pose a public health concern.

Helps control invasive species. Invasive species like deer and small mammals often contribute to a greater reliance on coyotes for food. Without proper coyote population management, these smaller species can proliferate at unsustainable rates, causing damage to crops, forests, and even impacting the health of native plants. Year-round hunting allows for a more controlled balance between these species, reducing their impact on the local environment.

In conclusion, year-round coyote hunting in Maine is not only necessary for the health of our ecosystems but is a practical and effective way to protect our agricultural resources and ensure the safety of Maine's communities. It provides a necessary tool for conservation and wildlife management, benefiting everyone who calls Maine home. Therefore, I urge policymakers to support and maintain year-round coyote hunting as an essential practice.