

Cote Ward  
Belmont  
LD 716

Dear Members of the Maine Legislature's Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee, I am writing to strongly oppose LD 716, "An Act to Restrict the Hunting of Coyotes," which seeks to limit coyote hunting to a six-month season from October 1 to March 31 and impose harsh penalties for violations. As a concerned citizen and someone who values Maine's wildlife balance and outdoor heritage, I believe this bill threatens the state's ecosystem, economy, and the well-being of its residents. Coyotes are a non-native, highly adaptable predator in Maine, and restricting our ability to manage their population—particularly through night hunting—would have serious consequences.

Coyotes arrived in Maine in the 1930s and have since thrived, often to the detriment of other species and human interests. An overpopulation of coyotes is not a hypothetical concern—it's a proven problem. These predators are a leading cause of deer fawn mortality, especially in spring and summer when fawns are most vulnerable. In areas like Aroostook County, where deer herds are already struggling, programs like the Aroostook County Conservation Association's coyote control efforts have shown that hunting and trapping coyotes can reduce predation pressure on deer. Limiting hunting to just six months—excluding key seasons when coyotes are most active and breeding—would allow their numbers to surge, further jeopardizing deer populations that hunters, conservationists, and rural communities depend on.

Beyond deer, an unchecked coyote population poses risks to other wildlife, pets, and livestock. Coyotes are opportunistic feeders known to prey on small mammals, ground-nesting birds, and even domestic animals like cats and dogs. Farmers in Maine and across New England have long reported livestock losses—particularly calves—to coyote predation. A 2015 USDA report found that coyotes accounted for over 60% of cattle losses to predators in New England, costing millions. By restricting hunting, LD 716 would strip away a critical tool for landowners and farmers to protect their livelihoods, leaving them defenseless against a growing predator population.

Night hunting is an essential part of this management strategy, and its importance cannot be overstated. Coyotes are primarily nocturnal, meaning they are most active—and most likely to hunt—under the cover of darkness. Maine's current night hunting season, from December 16 to August 30 with a Coyote Night Hunting Permit, allows hunters to target coyotes when they are most vulnerable and when their predation is most impactful. LD 716's vague language around night hunting creates uncertainty, but its intent to curtail hunting opportunities ignores the biological reality: daytime hunting alone cannot adequately control a nocturnal species. Without night hunting, coyote populations will grow unchecked during their peak activity periods, undermining the balance that hunters and the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (DIF&W) work to maintain.

This bill also dismisses the expertise of DIF&W, which has historically opposed similar restrictions, like LD 814 in 2023. The department understands that Maine's year-round daytime hunting and extended night hunting seasons are science-based tools to manage a predator with no natural enemies in our state. Coyotes aren't just a nuisance—they're a threat to biodiversity and rural life when their numbers spiral out of control. LD 716 overrides this informed approach with arbitrary limits that cater to emotion rather than evidence.

I urge you to reject LD 716 and preserve Maine's ability to manage coyote populations effectively. An overpopulation of coyotes endangers our wildlife, pets, and agricultural interests, while night hunting remains a vital method to keep their numbers in check. Let's trust the professionals at DIF&W and the hunters who

contribute to conservation, not tie their hands with restrictive laws that ignore reality.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Cote Ward  
Belmont, Maine