

Testimony of Lani Graham, MD, MPH

In Support of LD 1293

An Act to Prohibit Coyote-killing Contests in Maine

Presented by Senator Beebe-Center

Before the Inland Fish and Wildlife Committee, April 2025

Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts and Members of the Inland Fish and Wildlife Committee, my name is Lani Graham. I am from Freeport in support of LD 1293 because banning coyote killing contests is a step toward responsible wildlife management, ensuring ecological balance, ethical treatment of animals and ensuring a positive image for responsible hunters. Maine will not be the first state to take this step. States as diverse as Vermont and Arizona have already banned this ugly and pointless practice.

As you will hear from others, these killing contests do nothing to enhance population control nor increase deer populations. In fact, over 70 Conservation Specialists have signed an open letter condemning the practice, often for the very reasons it is touted.¹

Coyotes play a crucial role in ecosystems by controlling rodent populations and maintaining biodiversity. Killing large numbers of coyotes disrupts their social structures often leading to an increase in reproductive rates. And of course, random killings don't target problem animals, meaning that conflicts with pets or livestock may persist.

More effective wildlife management strategies include coexistence measures, targeted removal of problem animals and habitat modifications.

Many hunters oppose these contests because they create a negative image of hunters as people who glorify killing for its own sake. These contests are antithetical to Maine hunting traditions which are based on fair chase and a reverence for nature. Yet any effort to eliminate these derbies that history have shown don't work, is branded "anti-hunting".

It's time to listen to the experience of decades and move toward more scientific approaches to wildlife management.

Thank you for your attention. I hope this bill will get your unanimous support.

¹ https://projectcoyote.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SAB-Letter-Against-WKCs__FINAL_2021.01.13-2.pdf

