

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

**BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION, AND FORESTRY**

IN SUPPORT OF L.D. 528

**“An Act to Address the Rise in Rabies in Animals by Appointing Certified Rabies
Vaccine Administrators”**

SPONSORED BY: Representative DOUDERA of Camden.

**COSPONSORED by Senator TALBOT ROSS of Cumberland and Representatives:
DILL of Old Town, FROST of Belgrade, MEYER of Eliot, OSHER of Orono,
PLUECKER of Warren, Senator: TEPLER of Sagadahoc.**

DATE OF HEARING: Thursday, March 13, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Ross, Representative Pluecker and members of the Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee. I am Nate Webb, Wildlife Division Director at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, in support of **L.D. 528**.

This bill directs the Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to appoint one or more persons in each county to administer rabies vaccines to animals and to develop a training program for this purpose.

As part of our role in managing and conserving wildlife in Maine, MDIFW collaborates closely with other state and federal agencies on rabies management issues. With over 90% of confirmed rabies cases occurring in wild animals, our game wardens and wildlife biologists are often the front-line response in dispatching and submitting animals for testing, and we collaborate closely with DACF and Maine CDC in communications with the public when there has been a potential domestic animal or human exposure. Our Department has a full-time wildlife health biologist/veterinarian, whose responsibilities include coordinating our efforts on rabies surveillance and response. Our staff also work to educate and inform the public on ways to reduce conflicts with wildlife, especially for rabies vector species.

In recent years, rabies has been documented in wildlife further north than ever before, including in parts of the state where veterinary services are limited and people may not have easy access to rabies vaccines for their pets. We believe that this bill, which seeks to provide more options for pet owners to have their animals vaccinated, is an important step in reducing the spread of rabies to domestic animals and humans.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time or during the work session.