

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

**BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON
INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

In Opposition to L.D. 728

**An Act To Fairly Compensate Registration Stations for Bear, Deer, Moose and Turkey
Registrations**

SPONSORED BY: REPRESENTATIVE SAMPSON of Alfred.

COSPONSORED BY: Senator BLACK of Franklin and Representatives: COREY of Windham, DeVEAU of Caribou, HANLEY of Pittston, LANDRY of Farmington, MASON of Lisbon, ORDWAY of Standish, Senator: TIMBERLAKE of Androscoggin.

DATE OF HEARING: February 27, 2019

Good morning Senator Dill, Representative Nadeau and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Jim Connolly, Resource Management Director representing the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking in opposition to **L.D. 728**.

This bill amends the law governing registration of harvested animals to have registration agents retain \$4 of each registration seal for a bear, deer or moose. It also increases the amount collected for each wild turkey registered to \$3, leaving the amount retained at \$2.

Registration data from the harvesting of game animals is critical to the Department's wildlife management program. This data is gathered through established registration stations using cooperative agreements with the owner of the stations, which can be a store, sporting camp, meat processor or private individual. Many businesses compete for the privilege to register or "tag deer" because it is viewed as a way to attract customers to their business. The Department is not hampered in finding tagging stations to do the work we require as part of the registration or tagging process. The Department currently maintains a waiting list for new tagging stations and has a surplus of potential replacement stations. In addition, as store owners sell their businesses the presence of the tagging operation is a reason to possibly justify a higher business value.

The Department has concerns about the fiscal impact. In 2018 we implemented a direct data entry system for tagging deer, bear, moose and turkey. INFORME, the public/private contractor for state websites and applications developed and operates the new tagging system and collects \$1 for each animal tagged. We also contract through INFORME for call center assistance for our tagging agents so they have a 24/7 help line. The Department currently pays \$4 for each call made by a tagging agent. The new system has worked well overall, but we do have new costs associated with tagging game animals.

Lastly, the Department has concerns with the increase in the turkey registration fee. The Legislature only recently reduced the fee from \$5.00 by eliminating the Department's portion of the fee to encourage the harvesting of turkeys. The Department needs the data from registration stations to support our turkey management system. We feel raising the registration fee will interfere with our work to increase the turkey harvest and maintain the access to the necessary biological data that supports our turkey management system.

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