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Testimony Supporting LD 1265 May 3, 2021

An Act to Control the Means of Killing Coyotes

Senator Dill, Representative Landry, and members of the Joint Standing Committee Inland Fisheries & Wildlife:

My name is Ed Friedman and I chair Friends of Merrymeeting Bay (FOMB) and organization of about 450 households engaging in research advocacy, education and land conservation focused on the protection, preservation, and enhancements of the Merrymeeting Bay area and Gulf of Maine. Our membership includes many hunters and fishermen. I am testifying this morning in favor of LD 1265, An Act to Control the Means of Killing Coyotes.

Canine carnivores including Maine's coyotes are integral to human and ecosystem health. Why? If not obvious already from the incredible rise in tick-borne illnesses, Covid 19's likely relationship to wildlife wet markets should make clear that our human behavior toward wildlife and our actions toward the land are at least a very significant source of disease.

One behavior in particular is of great concern: the year round killing of our Coyotes, an important Keystone carnivore here in Maine. Of grave concern is not only the year round killing, but the violent manner in which this happens. Keystone carnivores play an important role in protecting other wildlife and humans from disease. Our coyotes play a vital role in controlling wildlife populations through the complexity of predator-prey relations. Coyotes can have a powerful effect in controlling small carnivores like foxes, raccoons and skunks, and therefore protect them from spreading rabies disease amongst themselves and to us.

In mid-April yet another rabid fox was shot in the Bath-Brunswick-Topsham area, the 4th in a couple of weeks. Coyotes generally control fox populations by means of territory...wherever Coyotes are, foxes are not. And Coyotes hunt raccoons and skunks as their prey, thus keeping their numbers in check.

Many Mainers suffer from Lyme disease, which along with the growth in other tick-borne disease has become ubiquitous here. This too is an expression of the imbalance in the natural system. This disease has become an epidemic because of the overpopulation of our deer on whose bodies adult ticks breed, and proliferation of white footed mice, who carry the bacterium and then infect ticks that bite them.

Last year while doing volunteer trail work for IF&W I was unknowingly bitten by a tick and contracted anaplasmosis, with malaria-like symptoms and which can be quite deadly. In 2010

Maine had virtually zero cases of this disease and by 2019 we had a few less than 700 diagnosed, including a number of hospitalizations.

Our coyotes have the ability to balance out the populations of deer and mice, and stamping out this epidemic, but only if we let them. In the meantime....our people and our children are suffering. In addition, more and more people in Maine are conferring with each other regarding the infringements of their private property rights due to this year round, unabashed killing of coyotes...day and night!

The insidious practice of sending hounds after terrified coyotes, who are trained to then attack and kill them, goes on all year long, despite the landowners vigorously objections. Land owners who always welcomed our traditional hunters on their land, now are posting because of these sinister and violent activities. So many of our Maine farmers have come to understand the value of coexisting with the carnivores who live on their farm. They realize that their farm needs them to keep the land balanced and healthy.

When the lives of coyotes are constantly thrown into chaos due to year round killing, conflict can arise with our farmers. Moreover, many farmers often keep their livestock out to graze at night in distant pastures, along with their guardian dogs. These dogs, highly trained at great investment are at increased risk of harm from coyote hunters and/or are can be terrified by these activities. In addition, a bill was passed to make silencers on guns legal. Thus this gives free rein to killing at night....anywhere.

So why do our Laws allow the YEAR ROUND KILLING of this important carnivore, who not only protect wildlife from disease, but also us? This bill will make it illegal to use hunting dogs to chase our Maine Coyotes to exhaustion and then kill them; it will make it illegal to bait Coyotes with the flesh of dead animals (a common source for lead ingestion by bald eagles) to draw them from their refuge and then shoot them; it will make it illegal to kill Coyotes at night. It is time!

I would encourage you to learn more about Coyote's value by visiting the educational website created for the people of Maine by Maine carnivore biologist Geri Vistein: <https://coyotelivesinmaine.org/coyote-center/> and also that of [Project Coyote](#) who has been particularly active at working to halt sickening wildlife killing contests still occurring in most states, including Maine and that real sportsmen and most others find revolting.

Please vote Ought to Pass on LD 1265.

Thank you.