



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

KATHY BERNIER

October 11, 2017

To: Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage
From: Rep. Kathy Bernier
Re: Assembly Bill 528 Youth deer hunting licenses / Group hunting party

Good morning Chairman Kleefisch and committee members. Thank you for hearing Assembly Bill 528 and for the opportunity to speak in favor.

If AB 528 looks familiar, it is. We unanimously passed this provision last session as AB 243 and it was signed into law as 2015 Wis. Act 100. However, due to a budget provision this session, which eliminated reference to “carcass tags,” the provision included in 2015 AB 243 was removed in error

Assembly Bill 528 recreates last session’s bill language and preserves the integrity of our efforts to promote youth hunting and ensure that youth carcass tags (now referred to simply as ‘youth licenses’) issued to hunters under age 18 are used properly. The bill addresses statutes regarding deer hunting regulations related to group hunting parties. Specifically, the bill prohibits an adult member of a hunting party from using a youth carcass tag (now “license”) to harvest an antlerless deer in-place of a youth member of their party.

The bill was brought forward in response to statewide complaints about hunting parties harvesting deer with licenses designated for youth, when those younger hunters are not the ones shooting.

A representative from the DNR will testify with more specific information, but I would be happy to answer any questions if I can. Again, thank you for your time and for hearing Assembly Bill 528.

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TERRY MOULTON



WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

23RD SENATE DISTRICT

From: Senator Terry Moulton

To: Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage

Re: Testimony on Assembly Bill 528
Relating to: restrictions on the hunting of antlerless deer by members of a group hunting party.

Date: October 11, 2017

Mr. Chairman and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today about Assembly Bill 528, which would fix a change made in the budget and continue to prohibit an adult member of a hunting party from shooting a deer for a member with a youth antlerless license.

Wisconsin has some of the best hunting and fishing in the world and these activities are an important part of our state's history, heritage, and economic development. The Department of Natural Resources and major Wisconsin industries depend heavily on hunters to control the white tail deer population along with other animals who threaten agriculture, transportation, and other industries. Every animal harvested by citizen hunters not only brings in revenue through licenses and tags, but also saves the Department of Natural Resources money in population control. In addition to the revenue brought in for the DNR, hunting has a large effect on tourism, retail, restaurants, hotels, and much more.

Unfortunately, in recent years, there has been a decline in the number of Wisconsin hunters. Declining numbers have a negative impact on the businesses and industries that count on hunting and the presence of deer on roadways has become more common. These are a few reasons why the state and the Legislature have been working on increasing the hunter population and growing interest in younger generations to carry on the stewardship and sport.

In 2013, the legislature passed the Sportsmen's Heritage Bill, a series of provisions aimed at hunter recruitment and retention, including the establishment of a youth hunt. While the youth hunt has been well-received, there have been complaints statewide of adults harvesting antlerless deer using a youth license during group hunting.

To fix the issue of adults using youth licenses unethically, Representative Kathy Bernier and I drafted a bill that would prohibit members of a group deer hunt from using a youth license issued to a different member of the deer hunting party. This bill had bipartisan support and was enacted into law as 2015 Wisconsin Act 100.

It was brought to our attention that a change in the 2017-2019 budget reversed Act 100, which is why we are introducing it again. Assembly Bill 528 would preserve the integrity of the youth hunt by prohibiting members of a group deer hunt from using a designated youth license issued to another member of the party. This bill would ensure that deer marked with a designated youth license were in fact harvested by youth. The whole point of the youth hunt is encouraging youth to join the sport, not provide more licenses for adult hunters.

I hope that the committee will recommend passage of Assembly Bill 528 to preserve the integrity of Wisconsin's youth hunt. Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony today.

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