



RHODE ISLAND
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
235 Promenade Street,
Providence, RI 02908

Office: 401.222.2771
Fax: 401.222.6802

February 6, 2024

The Honorable David A. Bennett
Chairman
House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

RE: H 7358 An Act Relating to Fish and Wildlife – Deer Hunting

Dear Chairman Bennett,

Thank you for providing the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) the opportunity to comment on H 7358, which was introduced on DEM's behalf and would amend current law relating to vehicle collisions with deer. DEM supports this legislation.

The amendments proposed in H 7358 would broaden reporting requirements from strictly applying to deer to instead apply to any accident involving wildlife that substantially damages a vehicle. This ensures that accidents involving large wildlife such as turkey or bear, in addition to deer, are reported to DEM. Data from these reports is used to inform statistical models used by wildlife biologists employed at DEM to estimate the population of these wildlife in Rhode Island. Ensuring that fatalities occurring due to collisions with vehicles are accounted for is an important component of the data used in these models.

The amendments also strike language specifically requiring that accidents be reported to a conservation officer and instead provide flexibility by stating that reports must be made to DEM. DEM's intent, if this legislation is enacted, is to establish an online reporting portal along with a designated phone number that individuals may report collisions to. This change ensures that Environmental Police Officers with the DEM Division of Law Enforcement and wildlife biologists and other staff with the DEM Division of Fish and Wildlife have access to the relevant information and can share resources responding to collisions.

Finally, the bill proposes to strike language that only allows the owner of the vehicle involved in a collision, along with their immediate family, to possess and consume the animal and replaces this language with an authorization for DEM to promulgate regulations governing how the

carcasses of animals involved in vehicular collisions may be possessed and used. The intent of this change is to allow other individuals and organizations to take possession of, and use, the carcass of the animal. The regulations would set a clear, predictable process for how interested individuals and organizations can be notified by DEM of an animal that is available to be taken due to a collision.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer comments on this legislation and would be pleased to make ourselves available as needed. Please feel free to contact Ryan Mulcahey, DEM Director of Legislative Affairs, at ryan.mulcahey@dem.ri.gov should you have any additional questions or wish to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Terrence Gray". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Terrence" being more prominent than the last name "Gray".

Terrence Gray, P.E.
Director

cc: Members of the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Nicole McCarty, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House
Lynne Urbani, House Policy Director