



NATIONAL SHOOTING SPORTS FOUNDATION, INC.

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TREVOR SANTOS
DIRECTOR, GOVERNMENT
RELATIONS/STATE AFFAIRS

April 26, 2017

The Honorable Michael Dembrow
Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
900 Court St. NE, S-407
Salem, Oregon 97301

Position: **Support**

Re: House Bill 2566A—Expansion of Youth Hunter Mentoring Program

Dear Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Olsen, and Members of the Committee:

As the trade association for America's firearms, ammunition, hunting, and recreational shooting sports industry, the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) seeks to promote, protect, and preserve hunting and the shooting sports. NSSF has a membership of more than 12,000 manufacturers, distributors, firearms retailers, shooting ranges, and sportsmen's organizations. Our manufacturer members make the firearms used by law-abiding Oregon sportsmen and women, the U.S. military, and law enforcement agencies throughout the state.

On behalf of NSSF, I would like to express our support for House Bill 2566A (HB 2566A). HB 2566A would build on Oregon's current youth hunter mentor program by expanding the ages to allow anyone between the ages of nine and 16 to participate as a mentored hunter. The youth participating as the mentored hunter would be under the direct supervision of a licensed hunter 21 years of age or older.

To combat a decline in the number of hunters across the nation, NSSF was part of a national effort in 2004 to recruit new hunters by expanding apprentice hunting opportunities throughout the country. The "Families Afield" program seeks to remove unnecessary legal barriers to hunting and create opportunities for adults to mentor those wishing to try hunting. Lengthy hunter education requirements often dissuade new hunters from getting out in the field, because novice hunters see the time investment as a hurdle too high. Such apprentice hunting licenses allow new hunters a "try-before-you-buy" approach and allow the new hunter to get in the field under the direct supervision of an experienced mentor. The ultimate goal of this program is to have the apprentice hunter complete a hunter education course in the future so that they may hunt on their own.

For every 100 adult hunters today, only 69 youth hunters are coming up to take their place. If allowed to continue, economic projections indicate funding for wildlife conservation could drop 25 percent by 2025. This decline could cause a 24 percent drop in revenue for the hunting

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industry. Since the passage of the first Families Afield measure in 2006, more than 1.7 million apprentice licenses have been sold nationwide. As you can see, the creation of an apprentice hunting license has been greatly successful in getting new hunters afield.

Due to the efforts of NSSF and other organizations such as the Sportsmen's Alliance, National Wild Turkey Federation, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, and the National Rifle Association, some 40 states have enacted Families Afield measures by creating apprentice hunting licenses. It is critical that we work to maintain our hunting heritage for the generations that follow us.

For the reasons stated above, the National Shooting Sports Foundation supports the passage of House Bill 2566A. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Trevor W. Santos