

TESTIMONY CONCERNING HB 6553

Andrea G. Sheptoff

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Senator Myer, Representative Roy, I would like to thank the members of the Environment Committee for the opportunity to express my concerns on House Bill 6553, An Act Concerning Sunday Hunting. I am a registered voter in Marlborough and a member of several wildlife and environment protection organizations. My land has been designated an Official Wildlife Sanctuary. My husband, my family and 99% of my neighbors all agree that passage of this Bill would negatively affect us. As even hunting organizations admit, it is difficult for a bowhunter to kill a deer with a single shot. Therefore, they provide in great length and detail methods of tracking injured prey. Most hunting magazines recommend waiting 30 minutes before tracking, list types of hits and how hunters should track. For example, "A heart-shot deer will sometimes jump wildly when hit. The blood trail may be sparse for the first 20 yards or so. A heart-shot deer may track as much as a quarter of a mile, depending on what part of the heart is damaged. Again, a 30-minute wait is advised. But, if while trailing you find where he has bedded, back off and wait an hour before taking up the trail again." Now, these instructions for a heart-shot deer mean the animal might suffer in agony for an hour and a half if the hunter is a successful tracker. I learned less accurate shots might result in a lost deer. This prolonged suffering is inhumane and cruel. And how often will one of these poor animals shot on a neighbor's private property end up maimed and suffering in agony in my backyard? It has happened to me before and I have discovered this is not as rare as you might think. Just last month a man found a doe impaled with an arrow in his yard. The deer was writhing in agony on the ground. The hunter trespassed to claim his deer and police were called. One report for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources indicated a wounding rate by bowhunters of 53%. Larry Gillette, a Wildlife Biologist, acknowledges that bowhunters fail to retrieve a substantial number of deer they shoot and does not advise the use of archery hunting to control deer populations. Hunting seasons seem to be continually lengthened and yet hunters comprise only 2% of our population. We who appreciate wildlife and would never torment or torture them would like to know our Sundays will be worry free. We would also like you to know that we would like the season lengthened when we can also enjoy our State Forests without wearing our bright orange vests, fearful that our dogs will not be mistaken for a hunter's prey.

In closing, I believe bowhunting is one of the cruelest forms of hunting because it wounds more animals than it kills. Dozens of scientific studies indicate bowhunting yields a 50% crippling rate. For every animal dragged from the woods, at least one animal is left wounded to suffer—either to bleed to death or become infested with parasites and diseases. And recently, research compiled by many wildlife experts indicates a reduction in sport hunting is one of the measures needed to control deer population. Left alone, the ratio of does to bucks would be approximately equal, allowing deer populations to regulate themselves naturally. I strongly hope you will not vote for this legislation. Thank you.

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