



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

**TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE Committee on the Environment
February 9, 2009**

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House Bill 5281 - An Act Concerning The Donation of Deer Meat to Nonprofit Entities

The Department of Public Health opposes House Bill 5281.

The Department of Public Health has a long held position that "wild game" food products should not be considered to have originated from an "approved source" for sale or service to the public because of the lack of a current regulatory program for wild game that is comparable to the USDA's veterinary, butchering and processing inspection program required for meat and poultry. In 1995 when PA 95-352 was proposed to allow "hunted game" to be donated to charitable or nonprofit organizations without compliance with the Connecticut Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act, the Department of Public Health provided testimony in opposition to the legislation.

The following are the public health reasons why PA 95-352 was opposed and should also be considered in deliberating the current proposed House Bill 5281: deer are a known reservoir for *E. coli* O157:H7 and other food borne pathogens; field-dressed carcasses are subject to environmental contamination and temperature abuse; the uninspected animals are not receiving an ante and post mortem disease inspection required by USDA for meat and poultry; the "needy and poor" recipients represent a vulnerable population often with compromised health and minimal access to health care and may be more seriously affected by consuming diseased or contaminated food. Additionally recent studies have found venison can be contaminated with lead as a result of bullets splintering on impact with bone or if hollow point ammunition is used.

Without adequate safeguards to ensure safe and sanitary handling of wild game (veterinary inspection of the carcass, commercial butchering and packaging of the meat, continuous time/temperature control of the carcass and meat) the existing C.G.S. Section 26-78a exemption for donated "hunted game" should be reconsidered as should expanding the exemption with the current proposed HB 5281.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's views on this bill.

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