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Testimony presented to the Select Committee on Children

IN OPPOSITION to H.B. No. 5566 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD SAFETY BY RESTRICTING THE PLACEMENT OF LEGHOLD TRAPS.

by Robert T. Crook, Director

February 21, 2013

The trapping bill has been debated since 1927, particularly during the late 1970s to the early 90s, and virtually every even year since. Due to facts available, it has never had the support of those who put reason over emotion.

Trapping deals with wildlife management. Scientific Wildlife Management is the responsibility of the DEEP who testified last year IN OPPOSITION to a similar bill. In our opinion, the DEEP leadership and their biologists we employ are the experts (many with doctorate degrees) in their field and must be supported. Who else has credibility on these issues?

The issue at hand is Child Safety and Leghold Traps. No documentation was presented that trapping in CT is a problem concerning children. There has never been an instance in CT of a child caught in any trap. Any event reported in testimony is anecdotal, possibly fabricated. In fact, we suspect NO valid documentation will be submitted concerning incidents of children being caught in CT or nation wide! Asked if any Connecticut children have been caught in leg-hold traps, Rep. Urban said "No, thank God." **Case closed - There is no problem!**

If no documented evidence of children affected by trapping is submitted, how and why was the arbitrary 100 feet from locations developed? Last year's bill called for 1500 feet then a substitute called for 750 feet. The distance is immaterial since Municipal governments/schools/private establishments can clearly post or refuse to issue mandatory written permits to trap on their land if they deem appropriate. None to our knowledge has done so, including in the sponsors district.

How many children that could step into a trap with opening less than 5 3/4" (a size about the size of your hand)? (except that traps with an opening of up to 7 1/2" may be set for beaver in waters frequented by beaver). How many children are in the woods or walking in the waters from early Nov. to mid-March and why? Parental responsibility? **The DEEP has previously testified against the bill, arguing that leg-hold traps - if deployed according to existing law - do not pose a threat to youngsters.**

There appears to be no trapping problem on any level. Trappers use the best and most humane traps available (sanctioned by the DEP wildlife experts); insure competency in all trappers (mandatory training); abide by daily trap checks, written permission of the landowner, names on traps; and volunteer time and effort to the public good. Conversely, anti-trapping groups have never supported any trap improvement or procedures initiated by DEP or trappers regardless of any benefit to wildlife and society.

This bill if JF'd must go to the Environment Committee where it failed last and in previous years. From my members I hear "Don't waste our time and money on frivolous bills that won't pass."

We suggest you review the **OFA report** issued on the 2009 Trapping bill! debated:
<http://www.cga.ct.gov/2009/SFN/2009SB-00994-R00-COR.htm> This analysis has fiscal impact on DEEP, \$482,000; increased costs to municipalities; imposes on Landowner Rights; and constitutes a serious diminution of wildlife management policy and effect. While not totally applicable to this bill, the potential impact should be considered. ---- Thank you.