

Dear Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile, and Honorable Members of the Environment Committee,

Please accept this as my testimony (for public hearing held on 2/25/13) in **OPPOSITION to SB 915**, An act authorizing bow and arrow hunting on Sunday.

*I am well acquainted with the facts contained in this summary, as I chaired a Tick-Borne Disease Action Committee in Newtown, Connecticut from 2009-2011, and the compelling research cited below was reviewed exhaustively by me during my chairmanship. I vote, and this issue is important to me.*

Why I oppose this bill:

- **Hunting will not reduce Lyme disease risk.** The Black-legged tick has well over 100 hosts, including all mammals, many popular songbirds, and even lizards – thus the removal of one host isn't enough to suppress the Lyme-disease causing tick (Ostfeld, 2011, Jordan et al, 2007). In addition, research indicates that hunting may put the public *more at risk* by creating disease “hot spots” (S. Perkins et al, 2006, Ginsberg and Zhioua, 1999; Ostfeld, 2011)--Ticks questing for a large host are more likely to end up on people and dogs after deer numbers have been reduced. There's a good reason why the CDC and health authorities don't recommend hunting to control Lyme disease – because it doesn't work. Sunday hunting won't help to curb the spread of this devastating disease, despite the claims of certain interest groups.
  
- **Bow-hunting results in unacceptably high crippling rates** –a high proportion of deer are wounded even when the most sophisticated forms of archery are used (Citations: Gregory 2005, Nixon et. al 2001, Moen 1989, Cada 1988, Boydston and Gore 1987, Langenau 1986, Gladfelter 1983, Stormer et. al, 1979, Downing). *Further, studies have shown that deer shot by an arrow travel a significant distance from the area where they were shot. This means that a wounded deer will very likely arrive on another property--either that of an adjacent landowner or on property where the hunter has no right to enter. This means that a deer will either die on someone else's property (subjecting that property owner to the unwelcome sight of a dying animal on their land) or the hunter trespasses to retrieve prey. According to Howard Kilpatrick's (a DEEP deer biologist) Redding, CT powerpoint presentation last year, a majority of hunters admitted in their responses to a DEEP survey in Redding that they left the property on which they were hunting in order to retrieve wounded prey.*
- **Sunday hunting will not resolve deer-related problems.** One of the main problems with trying to manage deer numbers through any kind of hunting -- as repeatedly cited during a Smithsonian Institute conference on Deer Overabundance (McShea et. al 1997) -- is that deer are highly prolific, and their high reproductive rate can quickly compensate for declines in their population. The net result is that their numbers “bounce back” after hunting season. Wild animals have high compensatory reproduction abilities which easily offset losses caused by hunting. This means that their numbers bounce back by the next breeding season due to increased litter size, breeding at an earlier age, increased juvenile survival, etc.—all phenomenon that are biologically adapted to help wild animals recover from cyclic population losses. Hunting merely creates this bounce-back effect which in no way provides any population “control” unless a large proportion of the population is removed along with the food source and habitat features which attracted them in the first place—all of which present a virtual impossibility except in the rarest of cases.  
*Bernard's Township, New Jersey, is illustrative in this regard. This township for ten years hunted intensively, and at the end of the ten-year period, they were unable to reduce deer numbers lower than 46 deer per square mile. Sunday hunting will not impact deer density to any significant extent.*

- **Only 1% of Connecticut residents hunt. Let the 99% enjoy a day of peace!** Wildlife watchers, hikers, mountain bikers, dog walkers, and horseback riders outnumber hunters in Connecticut by 29 to 1, and represent a growing demographic, while hunters are shrinking in numbers (39% decrease over ten years, per latest USFWS survey). Further, wildlife watchers outspend hunters by 7.4 to 1, contributing around \$510 million dollars to our state's economy annually (Source: The United States Fish and Wildlife Service). The overwhelming majority of people do not participate in hunting, and have only one day a week during hunting season when they can use the outdoors safely without the threat of bullets or arrows. Hunters already have four and a half months to hunt deer each year in Connecticut – more than 100 days of recreational deer hunting at six days each week. Farmers can obtain deer depredation permits to kill deer throughout the year. There is no compelling reason to disrupt this longstanding tradition to appease a tiny minority.
- **Sunday hunting will endanger public safety.** Arrows and bullets know no boundaries and pose public safety hazards to anyone who is in a large radius of the hunter. Further, domestic animals, such as dogs and horses, are sometimes mistaken for game animals. Thus, expanding recreational opportunities for hunters diminishes opportunities for all the rest of Connecticut's citizens: hikers, horseback riders, bird watchers, and many others.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Michele L. McLeod, M.D.

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