

**Testimony of Donald Danila presented to the Environment Committee IN SUPPORT of S.B #241 (Raised) - An Act Concerning Youth Fishing and Hunting Licenses, Revising Certain Hunting and Fishing License Fees and Requiring Registration by Hunting and Fishing Guide Services.**

I wish to provide testimony in favor of S.B 241, particularly those parts establishing a license exemption for secondary school students when participating in school fishing events or trips designed to teach fishing techniques, establishing a reduced license fee structure for young persons of 16 and 17 years of age, and providing CT DEEP Fisheries the ability to designate an additional 1 or 2 days per year on which a free 1-day fishing license may be issued.

I am a native of Connecticut and have spent the majority of my life as a state resident. I have been a life-long recreational fisherman, having fished in various Connecticut waters for some 60 years. I am presently a semi-retired professional fisheries biologist. Among my affiliations are a member of the Board of Directors of the Southern New England Chapter of the American Fisheries Society and for whom I am also a representative to the Fisheries Advisory Council to the CT DEEP, and a Town of East Lyme representative to the Niantic River Watershed Committee. Therefore, I am quite familiar with fish, fishing, aquatic environments, and the regulations pertaining to them. Please note, however, that these comments are my own and I am not speaking officially on behalf of any of these organizations.

This bill will help recruit and retain sport fishing anglers. The section pertaining to secondary schools will allow many more young people to be introduced to fishing and other outdoor activities. By allowing students to participate who would otherwise not do so because of a licensing requirement will likely result in many of them gaining an interest in fishing in subsequent years. Although children younger than age 16 can fish for free, presently young men and women age 16 and older must purchase a license and pay the same fees as adults. The ages of 16 and 17 are critical because these years are when young people have increasing options for leisure-time activities and must weigh the costs associated with them. A reduced license fee will permit many of these young people to continue fishing and lessen the prospect of them dropping out because of a perceived cost exceeding any benefit. Many of these younger anglers will develop a further appreciation of fishing and other positive values associated with outdoor activities. As such, they will continue to fish (and perhaps hunt or trap as well) and will purchase full-fee licenses as adults of ages 18 and older. As you know, a large portion of the monies needed by CT DEEP Fisheries to successfully manage our fish and wildlife resources come from license fees. Thus, it is important to maintain or increase the population of license holders, which have declined in recent years due to lessening participation. Similarly, granting free fishing days will permit the more casual angler (and their families) an opportunity to either try out fishing for the first time or maybe get back to doing something they did as youngsters. Again, this will result in increasing numbers of people purchasing licenses in the future and participating in fishing and other outdoor activities in Connecticut.

Given the positive benefits I see in this legislation, I respectfully urge your support of Bill 241.

Sincerely,

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