

Environment Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1523

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING BEAR HUNTING.

Vote Date: 3/28/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/24/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Environment Committee

Co-Sponsors:

Rep. Patrick E. Callahan, 108th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

Incidents of conflict between black bears and humans has been on the rise in Connecticut in recent years. Instances have included destruction of agricultural crops, destruction of livestock, engagements with pets, home invasions, and even personal attacks on humans. The risk to public safety as well as the to the agricultural industry and vulnerability to personal property has increased accordingly. In the last decade, per Department of Energy and Environmental Protection figures, human-bear conflicts have risen from 500 per year to 3,500. Home invasions in particular, are an especially concerning element of the upward trend. In 2023, legislation was passed that permitted the killing of bears in cases of self-defense, which typically occur in the home and are inherently dangerous, high-stress situations that exacerbate public safety concerns. Black bears in the state are growing more habituated to humans generally and are becoming food-habituated as well, making them more likely to enter homes and threaten humans and pets. Additionally, Connecticut is the only New England state with a significant black bear population that doesn't have a regulated bear hunt. Methods for sustainable and ethical control of the population are needed.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Katie Dykes, Commissioner, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP):

Commissioner Dykes expressed her support for this bill on behalf of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. She explained that bear human-bear conflicts have escalated recently, so much so that these conflicts have increased by a degree of three thousand per year in the last decade, and home entries by bears have similarly increased. She also pointed out that the non-lethal management strategies which DEEP has undertaken so far have all failed to quell the rising conflict between humans and bears. She clarified that DEEP does not support trophy hunting and believes that a well-regulated bear hunt can help reduce conflicts, and she pointed out that Connecticut is the only northeastern state that does not allow bear hunting.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Brian Bird, Chapter Coordinator, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers New England:

Mr. Bird expressed his strong support for this bill on behalf of the New England Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers. He explained the current situation of the rising black bear population in Connecticut and increasing number of bear attacks and home intrusions. He pointed out that a bear hunting season would be a proactive and sustainable measure to curb these increasingly frequent encounters.

Keith Cagle, President, Friends of Connecticut Sportsmen:

Mr. Cagle expressed his support for this bill on behalf of the Friends of Connecticut Sportsmen. He explained that the organization supports a healthy bear population and asserted that a growing bear population would inevitably lead to conflict between humans and bears.

Laird Hamberlin, CEO Safari Club International:

SCI supports SB 1523 and the wildlife management decisions that come from growing in the professionals at DEEP. This bill is important because it will provide management flexibility for Connecticut's growing bear population and the deference to the technical experts at DEEP regarding the parameters of a potential season. This bill will avoid unchecked growth of the bear population and reduce human-bear conflict.

William Hyatt, Vice-Chair, Connecticut Fisheries Advisory Council:

The FAC submitted testimony in support of SB 1523. As conservationists, they are proud of the return of bears to Connecticut, but along with that success comes a responsibility to manage the bear population in a scientifically sound and socially responsible manner. Regulated hunting is an important component of bear management.

Paul Larson, President, Connecticut Farm Bureau:

The Connecticut Farm Bureau support SB 1523. Their testimony outlines the increased incidences of bear damage to the crops and livestock of Connecticut farmers. There have been fields of sweet corn just about ready to harvest decimated by black bears. Bears have been documented breaking into chicken coops, killing or harming sheep, and ravaging

honeybee hives. This bill will allow wildlife professionals to determine the best process to manage black bears in Connecticut with a regulated hunting season.

Edmond Mone, First Selectman, Thomaston:

Supports this bill, as the dynamic between bears and humans will change with limited hunting.

Christian Ragosta, Assistant Manager of Northeastern States, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation:

The Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation **supports** this bill, as DEEP needs to have the necessary tools available to solve the growth of the black bear population in Connecticut. During the public hearing conducted by the Public Safety and Security Committee on February 27th, members of DEEP testified to the fact that they are employing all solutions to a regulated harvest of black bears, and a regulated harvest could be the missing tool to solving the issue. Connecticut is only one of three states to not authorize a harvest, and it has heavily contributed to the issue.

Tracey McDougall, Executive Director, The Connecticut Farm Bureau Association:

The Connecticut Farm Bureau Association **supports** this bill, as bears frequently damage sweet corn and field corn crops, apple orchards, beehives, and vineyards. Bears also seriously harm and frequently kill farm-raised livestock, which results in increased costs for farmers. Farmers also face significant losses when bears damage their property, which is frequently.

David T. Wilson, Retired State Representative, Dist. 66:

Retired Rep. Wilson supports S.B. 1523 based on the increasing incidence of human-bear encounters and the threats to public safety, as, citing personal experience as a Representative, a boy in his district was attacked by a black bear in 2022. Retired Rep. Wilson cites bear sightings in nearly every Connecticut town and reports of sows with cubs in nearly 90 individual towns.

Gary Sylvestre, Board of Directors, East Glastonbury Fish & Game;

Ted Wojcik:

Mr. Sylvestre and Mr. Wojcik support S.B. 1523, submitting identical testimony stating that they believe the positions of State Biologists and that their actions are grounded in science and not emotion. Furthermore, bear hunting licenses would add more revenue to the agency when bears are increasingly causing damage to crops and agricultural properties. They urges that "science, not sentiment" should be the driving force behind bear management.

Al Yanchak:

Mr. Yanchak submitted testimony in support of S.B. 1523, expressing concern about the rising bear population and increasing human-bear interactions. Although he opposes trophy hunting and values wildlife, he believes active population management is necessary. Having personal experiences with bear encounters and hearing stories from his neighbors in Hartland, he recognizes that they are large and potentially dangerous animals but are also beautiful, so is advocating for active measures to control their population level.

Justin Potter:

Supports this bill, as Connecticut is the only state in the northeast with a meaningful bear population that does not have a bear hunting season. In 2020, a bear sauntered through his backyard, and DEEP suggested to buy a paint ball gun, which was not reassuring. In 2022, a bear dragged a child into the woods in Morris, and in 2024, a dog in Cornwall was maimed by a bear, and a donkey was killed. These incidents indicate that change needs to be made. One farmer had to pay over one hundred thousand dollars to fix his farm. As the president of an affordable housing non-profit, Potter noted that thousands of dollars were taken from their limited budget to find a solution to keep bears out of dumpsters.

Benjamin Aldrich:

Mr. Aldrich expressed his strong support for this bill, explaining that hunting is one of the most effective ways to manage animal populations. Given the rising bear population, he asserted that a regulated hunting season is necessary.

Adam Augustine:

Mr. Augustine expressed his support for this bill, stating that bear hunting is a good way to control the growing bear population.

Raymond Baldwin:

Mr. Baldwin explained that, as a Connecticut resident who has witnessed the rising bear population, he supports regulated bear hunting as a population control measure.

Willis Ballard:

Mr. Ballard expressed his support for this bill, claiming that the implementation of a bear hunt is more than a decade overdue. He pointed out the overpopulation of black bears in Connecticut and that this is the only state or province in North America that does not have a black bear hunting season. He explained that multiple family members and farmers have tried deterrent measures recommended by DEEP to no avail, and he claimed that most of the testimony opposing this bill is uninformed and out of touch with Connecticut's ecology.

Stephen Barron:

Mr. Barron expressed his support for this bill and claimed that as the bear population grows, so will bears' impact on humans.

Kenneth Bergmann:

Mr. Bergmann explained that as a hunter, he supports a bear hunt no matter the capacity. He explained that using hunting as a means of population control for bears is a great way of respecting long-standing hunting traditions, and he claimed that hunters hold a great deal of respect for bears.

Carey Bernstein:

Mr. Bernstein expressed his support for this bill and recounted a close call he had with a bear in 2024. He stressed the fact that bears are wild animals and will kill their prey if given the chance.

Aaron Boucher:

Mr. Boucher expressed his support for this bill, noting the uptick in bear sightings in the Northwest corner of Connecticut.

Dawn Bradshaw:

Ms. Bradshaw expressed her support for this bill, pointing out that bear hunting is a viable source of food for many people.

Henry Broccoli:

Mr. Broccoli expressed his support for this bill, stating that bears are becoming a problem.

Francis Broderick:

Ms. Broderick expressed her support for a bear hunt administered by DEEP as a means of bear population control. She pointed out that the increasing bear population would inevitably threaten the humans that live in and near wooded areas.

Dieter Bromkamp:

Mr. Bromkamp expressed his support for this bill and for bear hunting as a wildlife management tool.

Emma Browning:

Ms. Browning expressed her support for this bill, explaining that as a mother of young children she has to worry about her kids coming into contact with bears. She also noted that as a hunter, she would love the opportunity to help Connecticut manage its bear population.

Hunter Browning:

Mr. Browning expressed his support for this bill, asserting that after the increase in bear attacks and encounters the bear population should be thinned through hunting.

Adam Buggy:

Mr. Buggy expressed his support of the decisions made by the wildlife biologists at DEEP and, concurrently, his support for this bill.

Nick Campbell:

Mr. Campbell expressed his support for this bill, flagging the overpopulation of bears in the northwest corner of the state as a potential problem.

Chas Catania, Friends of CT Hunting:

Mr. Catania expressed his support for this bill, pointing to the public safety risk posed by the growing population of black bears as a good reason to start a bear hunt.

Brian Catlin:

Mr. Catlin expressed his opposition for this bill due to the increased number of bear attacks since 2023.

Cameron Clegg:

Mr. Clegg expressed his support for this bill, pointing out that it would expand the time-honored New England tradition of hunting. He also noted that it would reduce management costs imposed on DEEP.

Charles Cocca:

Mr. Cocca expressed his support for this bill and his belief that bears should learn to fear humans.

Alon Cohen:

Mr. Cohen expressed his support for this bill on the grounds that bears have no natural predators and that they will inevitably attack local farms and livestock.

William Connoles:

Mr. Connoles expressed his support for this bill and suggested that the state could implement a lottery system similar to that used in moose hunts up North.

Kyle Cooney:

Mr. Cooney expressed his support for this bill, explaining that wildlife management officials and biologists have exhausted every option other than a bear hunt for controlling the bear population.

Riju Das:

Mr. Das expressed his support for this bill, pointing out that any alternative methods to control the growing bear population have been tried and have failed. He explained that if the bear population continues to grow, the resulting situation will be much worse than it is now. He also noted that Massachusetts and Rhode Island, which have experienced similar problems with bear populations, have also allowing bear hunting.

Jacob Depot:

Mr. Depot expressed his support for this bill and his belief that natural resources should not be managed by a state legislature, but by professional scientists. He also noted that bear hunting could ease the burden of rising food costs on families.

Chase Salazar:

Mr. Salazar supports the bill as it's in agreement with the "North American wildlife conservation model."

Ed Schierloh:

Mr. Schierloh supports the bill because the growing bear population needs to be addressed before a tragic human-bear encounter occurs, noting the only way to address the problem is via hunting

Patty Taylor:

Ms. Taylor supports the bill due to personal experiences living in New Jersey where she and relatives had frequent, destructive encounters with black bears. Bears are also dangerous and killed a calf on her farm in Connecticut. Tight management of the bear population is >

Brandon Wilson:

Mr. Wilson expressed strong support for S.B. 1523, citing the rapidly growing bear population and increasing bear-human conflicts, including home entries and attacks, as major public safety concerns. A limited, lottery-based hunt would help manage the population, particularly in rural areas, without harming the ecosystem. Mr. Willson also highlights the potential benefits of using bear meat as a nutritious, sustainable food resource, like practices in other states.

Anonymous:

An anonymous individual expressed their support of this bill, noting that bears have damaged trees, fences, and a truck on their property. They explained that as a deer hunter, they have noticed a significant decrease in the deer population; they speculated that it is connected to the increasing bear population.

Anonymous:

An anonymous individual expressed their support for this bill, as bear hunting would reduce property and livestock damage.

Additional Testimony:

Twenty-four (24) individuals expressed their general support for this bill. Testimony was provided by:

- [Anthony Carlino](#)
- [Charles Batty](#)
- [Ryan Bailey](#)
- [Aaron Beach](#)
- [Stephen Bennett](#)
- [Robert Burns](#)
- [Michelle Chappell, Little Meadow Farm](#)
- [Donald Chapman](#)
- [Jeffrey Chmura](#)
- [Matt Clarke](#)
- [Mitch Conner](#)
- [Jon Cote](#)
- [Dylan Curtin](#)
- [Shaun Daigle](#)
- [Linda Dalessio](#)
- [Don Dalonzo](#)
- [Scott Davidson](#)
- [Tim Davis](#)
- [Guthrie Dinda](#)
- [Shawn Donahue](#)
- [John Espinoza](#)
- [Dennis Farrington](#)
- [Stephen Ferriola](#)
- [Ernest Frick](#)

90 individuals provided testimony in support of the bill:

Louis Maggio, Ralph Mancini, John Mandeville, Chris Marino, Jason Martin, Steve Masalin, Michael McDaniel, William McIntosh, Colin McNamara, Brandon Melanson, Hunter Mercuriano, Karen Miller, Paul Miller, Zachary Miller, William Millette, Joseph Mills, Robert Misbach, Ken Mittelstadt, Brian Mongeau, Jason Mumbach, Katherine Murphy, Mike Nastri, Michael Natoli, Paul Natoli, John Nikolai, Kristopher Nordby, Bob O'Connell, Adam Oehlenschlager, Shellene Olson, Lynda Osden, Mike Ose, Michael Pacheco, Heather Palmer, Kenzie Palmer, Pamela Palmer, Sandra Pane, Alan Paneccasio, Paul Panus, Leo Pare, Austin Parrow, Nanette Peach, Shawn Peach, Dan Pedalino, Courtland Perkins, Wayne Petroskey, Dedorah Phelps, Thomas Phelps, Christopher Platzer, Clayton Potter, Michael Rak, Walter Ranchinsky, Krista Rapacki, Brian Reynolds, Lorealea Rivera, Derek Rudd, T James Russell, William Salveggio, Michael Savoia, Mark Schmidt, Richard Schmidt, Mark Schroeder, Patrick Shannahan, Scot Sioch, Matt Smith, Sean Stevens, Frank Sypeck, Fran Tamburro, Erick Taylor, Jonathan Yaylor, Lexi Taylor, Bruce Tolhurst, Timothy Tomko, Mo Torrent, Judith Treadway, Leslie Treadwell-Antoch, Mark Trotochaud, Erik Ungewitter, Andrew Venditto, Kenneth Victoria, Krysta Vitali, Kevin Wagner, Joseph Wascholl, Justin Widomski, Garrett Wilga, Ashley Wilson, Jeffrey Yale, Juan Zavaleta, Michael Zieminski, Joseph Wascholl,

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Lori Brown, Executive Director, CT League of Conservation Voters:

Ms. Brown expressed her opposition to this bill on behalf of the CTLCV. She noted that hunting does not impact the bears that interact with humans and that, according to figures from DEEP, the bear population is at less than 50% of the state's capacity. She suggested that the committee instead pursue a robust public education program on how to use bear resistant garbage containers and keep potential food sources secure.

Samantha Dynowski, State Director, Sierra Club Connecticut:

Ms. Dynowski expressed her opposing to this bill on behalf of Sierra Club Connecticut, pointing that bears killed in the woods in a hunt are likely not the same bears coming into contact with humans. She also noted that laws already exist that allow DEEP to capture and kill problematic bears.

Susan Eastwood, Chapter Chair, Sierra Club Connecticut:

Ms. Eastwood expressed her strong opposition to this bill and bear hunting in general. She explained that the scientific consensus debunks the idea that trophy hunting will reduce human-bear conflicts, and she proposed that DEEP should instead ramp up public education efforts and programs to reduce food attractants here humans reside.

Laura Simon, President, Connecticut Wildlife Rehabilitators Association (CWRA):

The Connecticut Wildlife Rehabilitators Association (CWRA) strongly opposes (emphasis original) S.B. 1523 because, "as numerous studies show, hunting not only doesn't reduce conflicts, but it is actually counterproductive." Often, bears killed in rural areas are not the same bears that engage in conflict with humans but are those who are "living where they are supposed to be," engaging in natural bear behavior. Further, DEEP takes the wrong approach by focusing on how many bears that should exist in the state, since it is food availability that causes problems. Many other states invest in public education which have

yielded steep declines in conflicts. Citing two scientific studies, bear conflicts are directly correlated to food availability provided by humans and unwanted "bear behavior can be fixed by changing the *human* behavior causing the problem." Bear hunting would also have an "unintended but disastrous outcome" of orphaning bear cubs, for which the state has no adequate rehabilitation apparatus. Arguments on the basis of safety are also refuted since discrete lethal action is already permitted. The CWRA urges a focus instead on public education and proven strategies such as those espoused by "Bearsmart.com." Finally, numerous scientific papers are cited in support of the inadequacy of hunting to adequately control unwanted and unnatural bear behavior.

Dr. Michael Sanders, Doctor Veterinary Medicine:

In his expert opinion as a wildlife veterinarian and Master of Science in Biodiversity and Conversation Biology, Dr. Sanders opposes S.B. 1523 and urges an emphasis on public education, deterrents and non-lethal actions, which are, evidentiary, the most effective approaches. Adopting S.B. 1523 would likely only cause more problems for safety in the state. Killing black bears might be more like to increase, rather than decrease, human-bear conflicts. Hunting removes healthy, non-problematic bears and often targets the most robust individuals, impacting the broader genetics of the population. Black bears that exhibit typical, natural behaviors are also likely be killed; the very bears that are vital to encouraging the natural behaviors in the greater population through the rearing of cubs and the maintained stability of territories. Scientific studies, like one cited by Dr. Sanders, showing no evidence that harvests reduce human-bear conflict.

David Michel, Former Connecticut State Representative:

Opposes this bill, as bear incidents have nothing to do with their population number and the sightings used to estimate the population are very often the same bear traveling through the area. Suggests that bear hunting should be banned within five hundred feet of all blaze trails in Connecticut, it should be banned when the hunter is intoxicated, and hunters should wear fluo blue.

Deborah Galle, Graduate Student & Board Member, Connecticut Wildlife Rehabilitators Association:

Ms. Galle opposes the bill arguing that hunting is not an effective way to reduce human-bear conflicts, which are primarily driven by human behavior, especially food attractants. Killing bears in the woods does not address issues in populated areas. Killing bears can lead to orphaned cubs, Connecticut is unequipped to rehabilitate and detrimental to the population. Beyond food-driven incidents, Ms. Galle highlights the role of off-leash dogs in bear encounters and stresses the need for better public education about bear behavior, (which she explains in detail), that is often misunderstood and sensationalized. Instead of resorting to hunting, she advocates for a collaborative, science-based management approach involving diverse stakeholders, public education, and investment in bear-proof infrastructure. She volunteers to be part of such a committee. Finally, she provides links to resources in support of her position.

Nicole Rivard, Government Relations Manager, Friends of Animals:

Friends of Animals **opposes** this bill, as Connecticut residents can work together to keep black bears safe without resorting to a hunt. Bears who are killed deep in the woods are not the bears that are hurting humans. Non-lethal community-based solutions, such as education, are effective in mitigating human-bear interactions.

Alan J. Siniscalchi, President, Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions (CACIWC):

The Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions (CACIWC) opposes S.B. 1523, though stresses that it is not opposed to hunting and recognizes the benefits that hunting The CACIWC recommends instead, public education on bear management and emphasizes erecting barriers and the reduction in available food attractants.

Susan Linker, Board Chair, CT Votes for Animals:

CT Votes for Animals opposes SB 1523. They testified that hunting bears is unnecessary and effective measures to control the black bear problem include:

1. Educating the public to never intentionally feed bears.
2. Encouraging the use of bear-resistant trash cans and proper storage of trash.
3. Promoting the removal of bird feeders and other food attractants, March to November
4. Advising homeowners to secure outdoor grills and pet food
5. Using non-lethal deterrents such as loud noises, air horns and yelling
6. Protecting agriculture and livestock through electric fences and other barriers

Annie Hornish, Senior State Director, Humane World of Animals:

The Humane World of Animals opposes SB 1523. They believe that the human-bear conflicts are a "people problem" not a bear problem, and could be resolved through education and the application of simple non-lethal techniques like using bear-resistant trash can, removing bird feeders while bear are out of the den, keeping dogs on a leash, and protecting farm animals with electric fences.

Dr. Nan Zyla-Wisensale:

Dr. Zyla-Wisensale opposes S.B. 1523. Dr. Nan Zyla-Wisensale argues that the estimated bear population is based on sighting reports, which are an unreliable indication of true bear population, and hunting without accurate population totals could cause ecological harm. Moreover, DEEP suggests that available human-supplied food sources are the main cause of conflicts and that DEEP could be subject to bias due to the funding received by licenses. Dr. Nan Zyla-Wisensale instead suggests human behavior modifications such as removing birdfeeders, preventing access to garbage and employing electric fences.

Kathleen Magner:

Opposes this bill, as there are already serious threats that exist for black bears, including vehicle collisions, poaching, and the new discovery that black bears can now contract avian influenza H5N1. Non-lethal strategies, such as bear resistant trash containers, are just as effective. In 2014, Yosemite National Park reported a ninety-two percent decrease in human/bear incidents due to public education programs. Hunting also does not solve bear-human interaction issues, as black bears are shy animals that only interact with humans when there are human-generated attractants.

Bette Jane Haskell:

Ms. Haskell opposes S.B. 1523 and emphasizes that education, rather than hunting, is the best way to manage bear encounters. In her personal experience, and with understanding gained from DEEP and other sources, she follows recommendations and has never felt

threatened. In her view, documentation showing that hunting doesn't reduce the population and results in orphaned cubs "says enough."

Melvie Hatfield:

Ms. Hatfield opposes S.B. 1523 arguing it does not reduce human-bear interactions. Instead, they advocate for simple preventative measures like removing bird feeders, securing trash, and eliminating food attractants—practices that have successfully reduced bear activity in their neighborhood. They emphasize bears' intelligence and the importance of peaceful coexistence, expressing concern about the dangers of hunters with guns near residential areas. They believe hunting, especially on state lands, does not solve issues in neighborhoods and poses unnecessary risks.

Mary Jean Agnosti: Ms. Agnosti expressed her opposition to this bill and her belief that humans have moved into bears' territory.

Amy Jean Smith-Alvey: Mrs. Smith-Alvey explained that bear hunting won't solve problems with human-bear conflicts, and that instead people should look into ways to bear-proof food sources near human development. She pointed out that New Jersey's bear hunts did not meaningfully decrease the number of bear encounters.

Chris Alvey: Mr. Alvey explained that having grown up in Litchfield County, he learned how to coexist with bears. He expressed his opinion that opening up a bear hunt is a bad idea and does not consider alternative methods to reduce human-bear conflicts.

Cecily Baran: Ms. Baran expressed her opposition to this bill, noting the importance of bears to the local ecosystem and asserting that killing bears does nothing to assuage human-bear conflicts.

Anne Basile: Ms. Basile expressed her opposition to this bill, noting that it has been debated in the legislature in some form for the last decade. She pointed out that a comprehensive public awareness campaign would be much more effective in reducing human-bear conflicts.

Carolyn Behre: Ms. Behre expressed her opposition to this bill and her concern with human encroachment on Connecticut's natural ecosystems.

Rebecca Bent: Ms. Bent expressed her opposition to this bill and her frustration that the legislature thinks bear hunting will reduce human-bear conflicts. She explained that securing trash cans and other food sources would go much further than a bear hunt in controlling the bear population in the state.

Lauren Black: Ms. Black urged the committee to vote against this bill, recounting an incident in which her next-door neighbor shot and killed a black bear. She noted that while the bear's cubs were taken into a rehabilitation facility in New Hampshire, many more bear cubs will die if the state allows for a bear hunt.

Peter Brail: Mr. Brail expressed his opposition to this bill, claiming that bear hunting has no useful purpose and would only serve to orphan cubs.

Mark Brault: Mr. Brault expressed his opinion that there should not be a bear hunt until a peer reviewed study is conducted, and that in the meantime there should be a locking trash can and dumpster law enforced with fines.

John Brewery: Mr. Brewery expressed his opposition to this bill, stating that comprehensive bear management would be a much better alternative to a bear hunt.

Adam Brill: As a resident of Southington, Mr. Brill expressed his opposition to this bill. He asserted that a public education campaign would reduce the instances of human-bear conflict, and that a bear hunt would only lead to an increase in orphaned bear cubs.

Emily Bryson: Ms. Bryson expressed her opposition to this bill, stressing that human-bear conflicts can be reduced by removing bear attractants (namely garbage and food) from human-populated areas. She expressed her belief that humans are supposed to be stewards of the Earth and that a bear hunt runs contrary to that.

Linda Buckley: Ms. Buckley expressed her opposition to this bill, calling bear hunting a cruel measure. She suggested looking into public education, the use of bear-resistant storage containers, and non-lethal deterrents instead of a bear hunt.

Jennifer Campbell: Ms. Campbell expressed her opposition to this bill and claimed that bears have just as much of a right to live in Connecticut as humans do.

Samantha Centore: Ms. Centore expressed her opposition to this bill and her belief that the burden should be on humans to find different ways to reduce human-bear conflicts. She noted that hunting will result in many bear cubs being orphaned, cubs which will likely be euthanized afterwards.

Deborah Chute: Ms. Chute expressed her opposition to this bill and explained that public education, bear resistant trash cans, and eliminating bird feeders are all better ways to decrease human-bear conflicts than bear hunting.

Cheri Collins: Ms. Collins expressed her opposition to this bill and her frustration with DEEP's black bear management tactics so far. She noted that the bears hunted on Connecticut forests are not the nuisance bears that encroach on human development and that DEEP is pandering to trophy hunters.

Griffin Colopy: Mr. Colopy expressed his strong opposition to this bill, claiming that as an intelligent species humans must find better solutions to wildlife-related issues than simply killing animals. He called for better public education and more responsible behavior, noting that communities with robust public education campaigns on how to deter bears experience fewer bear-human conflicts.

Ann Marie Conaty, State Licensed Rehabber: Ms. Conaty expressed her opposition to this bill, as it would leave bear cubs orphaned and force them to turn to human neighborhoods for food.

Jason Cote: Mr. Cote expressed his opposition to this bill, stating that trophy hunting will not reduce human-bear conflicts. He suggested that the state instead look into removing food attractants and starting a public education campaign.

Matthew D: Mr. D expressed his opposition to this bill and explained that the problem is not overpopulation of bears, but overdevelopment from humans.

Ronald Degray: Mr. Degray expressed his opposition to this bill and all forms of hunting for fun.

Andrea Dobras, Connecticut Votes for Animals: Ms. Dobras urged the committee to oppose this bill and argued that killing should never be the answer to problems caused by human behavior. She explained that a public education campaign would be more effective at reducing human-bear conflicts than a hunting season would, and she pointed out that DEEP already has provisions for removing or killing problematic bears.

James Dolce: Mr. Dolce expressed his opposition to this bill, claiming that it would have negative consequences for both the humans and the bears of Connecticut. He noted that the main contributor to bear-related problems was the presence and availability of food sources in developed areas, and he argued that a public education campaign to address this issue would be much more effective than a bear hunt. He also pointed out that many bear sightings come from a small number of bears that come back to the same human-occupied areas.

Kristine Dudecz: Ms. Dudecz expressed her frustration with this bill, asserting that Connecticut should be honored by the presence of bears in the state and that a bear hunt is excessively cruel.

Cynthia Edgar: Ms. Edgar expressed her opposition to this bill, as a bear hunt would result in many orphaned bear cubs. She noted that she has encountered scores of bears and has never had an issue.

Roger Emerick: Mr. Emerick expressed his belief that bear hunting is sadistic and the death penalty for murderers would make more sense than killing bears.

Sheriden Franklin: Mr. Franklin expressed his opposition to this bill, asserting that bears are more afraid of humans than humans are of bears.

Karen Schnitzer:

Ms. Schnitzer opposes S.B. 1523 due to the many valuable benefits that they provide to their ecosystem: "they regulate insect populations, disperse seeds, open canopies and amend soils." Studies have shown that food availability drives human-bear interactions. Ms. Schnitzer notes that there are legal provisions for bears currently in place. Rather than killing, non-violent measures are needed in the form of conflict reduction community grants that would fund bear resistant trash cans and electric fencing.

Irene Skrybailo:

Ms. Skrybailo opposes S.B. 1523 for several reasons. Human-bear conflicts are not reduced by hunting and well proven solutions such as education and attractant removal work. Hunts

actually increase interactions as evidenced by a documented increase in interactions during New Jersey bear hunts in 2011-2014. Public education works, as in Yosemite National Park where human-bear conflicts were reduced by 92% in 2014 as a result of education programs. the bear population in the state is low from historic deforestation, only rebounding in the 1980's, with a UConn Wildlife and Fisheries Conservation Center report counting 400 adult bears compared to a state capacity of 2,000 identified by DEEP. Populations are self-regulating due to naturally terminating pregnancies if females do not add a certain weight in a certain timeframe.

Dr. Laura Spinu:

Dr. Spinu strongly opposes S.B. 1523 due to the "serious ethical, ecological, and practical concerns" that it poses. Dr. Spinu enumerates five (5) separate points as follows:

1. Bear killing is unnecessary and inhumane.
2. Scientific data shows killing is ineffective in reducing human-bear conflicts
3. The majority of Connecticut residents are not in favor of killing wildlife
4. Hunting bears, a keystone species, would cause ecological harm
5. Safety concerns can be addressed with non-lethal means

K F: As a resident of a town where he regularly comes into contact with bears, Mr. F expressed his opinion that a bear hunt is useless. He stated that he is honored to live next to such beautiful creatures and he pointed out that public education campaigns and "Bearsmart" communities would do a much better job at reducing human-bear conflicts than a hunt would.

Anonymous: An anonymous individual expressed their opposition to this bill, stating that trophy hunting does not reduce human-bear conflicts. They suggested looking into public education and eliminating food sources near human development as alternative ways of reducing conflict, and they expressed their frustration with DEEP's insufficient attempts at public education on bears.

Anonymous: An anonymous individual expressed their opposition to this bill, claiming that bear hunting would do nothing to reduce human-bear interactions. They explained that to remediate the issue, humans should reduce food attractants instead of killing bears and orphaning bear cubs.

Jen Anonymous: Ms. Anonymous expressed her opposition to this bill and remarked that hunting is a cruel and unnecessary measure.

Additional Testimony:

Eighteen (18) individuals oppose S.B 1523 on the grounds that hunting does not reduce human-bear conflicts, results in orphaned or euthanized cubs, and that humans, not bears are the problem. They urged the adoption of proven, non-violent solutions which include: coordinated education campaigns, reduction of food attractants (e.g. accessible garbage and birdfeeders), and successful "Bearsmart" practices, Testimony was submitted by:

- **Deborah Givanov**
- **Terry Goodwin**
- **Bridget Guzzardi**
- **Dr. Daniela Santos**

- [Cindy Scannell](#)
- [Alina Schoepfer](#)
- [Janice Swiatek](#)
- [Virginia Van Norden](#)^v
- [Jamila Viandier](#)
- [Pat Vogt](#)
- [Heather Walsh](#)
- [Bonnie West](#)
- [Michael Wiliston](#)
- [Kristina Wilson](#)
- [Christine Yannielli](#)
- [Beverly Zeroogian](#)
- [Susan Zilke](#)
- [Mary-Claire Zoghb](#)

Additional Testimony:

In nearly identical testimony, (34) individuals expressed their **opposition** to this bill and their concern for the inevitable orphaned bear cubs that would result from a bear hunt. They noted DEEP's policy of euthanizing bear cubs under six months old and less than sixty pounds in weight, and they suggested that human behavior be changed to reduce human-bear conflicts. Furthermore, they referenced scientific studies, such as a 2024 publication by [Berkowitz, et. al](#), which examines bear population and behavior and bear-human conflicts in great detail. Testimony was provided by:

- [Jill Alibrandi](#)
- [Audrey Baehr](#)
- [Elizabeth Bernard](#)
- [Sam Beck](#)
- [Barbara Biel](#)
- [Dawn Boothe](#)
- [Nicole Bruck, Founder and Director, Animals-R-Family](#)
- [Tresa Candemo](#)
- [Angelina Carnevale](#)
- [Susan Cerniglia](#)
- [Deborah Cyr](#)
- [Holly Darico](#)
- [Barbara Douglas](#)
- [Jeannette Franco](#)
- [Patryk Gabrysiak](#)
- [Katie Geddes](#)
- [Jose Luis Greco](#)
- [Renee Haines](#)
- [John Halan](#)
- [Josh Halan](#)
- [Lisa Haut](#)
- [Peter Shields](#)
- [Cristina Sarno](#)
- [Tina Sarno](#)

- [Keith Schuman](#)
- [Diana Smith](#)
- [Philip Sobask](#)
- [Katherine Stapp](#)
- [Thomas Tierney](#)
- [Robert Toher](#)
- [Dr. Kevin Walsh](#)
- [Sally Westcott](#)
- [Nicolle Wuchek](#)
- [Alison Zyla](#)
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Additional Testimony:

Twenty-two (22) individuals expressed their **general opposition** to this bill. Testimony was provided by:

- [Linda Christina](#)
- [Nancy Decrisantis](#)
- [Allissa Dempsey](#)
- [Masako Doi](#)
- [Alexandra Donati](#)
- [Theresa Douglas](#)
- [Rosamund Downing](#)
- [Tenya Marie Economou](#)
- [Sheryl Esposito](#)
- [Brandie Fiore](#)
- [Joseph Fitzpatrick](#)
- [Jeff Fusco](#)
- [Chuck Seeman](#)
- [G Simmons](#)
- [Peggy Sinkkonen](#)
- [Molly Smith, CWRA Member](#)
- [Nicole Smith](#)
- [Jamie Snow](#)
- [Jay Snukis](#)
- [Karen Williams](#)
- [Anonymous](#)
- [Anonymous](#)

74 individuals provided testimony in opposition of the bill:

Beatriz Gallegos, Fawn Garbonola, Diana Gault, David Gorman, Dagmar Guard, Kim MacLeod, Melissa Mackin, Valerie Maloney, Amber Mancini, Melissa Mancini, Kate Marchwinski, Janet Marineau, Sara Martin, Francis Mastri, Astrid Mayyas, Anne Mazzone, Ryann McCab, Joan McCoy, Stephen McDonald, Julia McElroy, Jacqueline McGrath Curtis, Linnea McHenry, Audrey McPeak, Donna Meadors, Lisa Menko, Anita Miller, Edward Miller, Dana Muller, Cynthia Newby, John Ogren, Alexandria Ortiz, Alison Oscar, John Ostazewski, Lauren Pagani, James Patton, Christine Paulson, Michael Pavin, Diwo Pemba, Caitlin Phillips, Mary

Anne Phillips, Sheryl Pierson, Cathy Popp, Erica Potterton, Shawn Prajzner, Beverly Propen, Jordan Provost, Mya Przyborowski, Patricia Austin-Puccio, Venom Rashid, Ashley Raynock, Elizabeth Re, Lucy Regan, Ines Reis, Anne Rockwell, Kristen Roeckle, Alexandra Romanova, Melanie Rosen, Heather Harrison-Rouilla, Kristen Rzasa, Yahaira Soto, Kathy Strong, Nancy Tashash, Teresa Tenerowicz, Patricia Testa, Emily Trenkner, Lesley Vainder, Cindy Vaporis, Christine Vaughn, Meghan Vogt, Ally Wells, Dr. Kevin Walsh, Anne Westbrook, Richard Wilson, Karen Zito

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Robert LaFrance, Director of Policy, Audubon Connecticut/New York, National Audubon Society (Audubon):

The Audubon has a long history of working with DEEP and the scientists in the Division of Wildlife, including bear management. The critical part of preventing conflict is includes keeping food sources like birdseed, trash and pet food locked up but the Audubon relies on the expertise of DEEP Wildlife Biologists to advise them on appropriate wildlife management strategies for the black bear population in Connecticut. Without explicitly taking a position, Audubon, emphasizing the importance of managing human-bear conflict, encourages education and habitat awareness rather than via hunting. The Audubon wants to lower human-bear conflict by keeping bears wild and by reducing the number of food-conditioned bears, which pose the greatest threats to people and property, within the population. Rather than hunting, the focus belongs on public education and responsible coexistence.

David Bradt:

Mr. Bradt explained that he supports DEEP's decisions regarding wildlife management, as they come from scientific biological studies.

Clyde Breakell:

Mr. Breakell stated that there is no reason for this bill not to pass, and he went on to assert that a bear hunt would instill a fear of humans into bears, something that most bears in Connecticut do not have.

Tom Maloney:

The committee should celebrate the return of the black bear to the woods, but wildlife biologists should be the individuals to decide whether a hunting season is warranted. Urges the committee to review the written testimony of DEEP Commissioner Katie Dykes, and in-person testimony of DEEP Deputy Commissioner Mason Trumble.

The following individual also provided general comments on the bill:

William Prutting,

Reported by: Sam Sims, Casey Larkin, Judy Ganswindt, Abigail Lockwood

Date: 4/11/2025