



Rhode Island Farm Bureau 16B Nooseneck Hill Rd West Greenwich, RI 02817  
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Attn: Representative Bennett, Chair, House Environment and Natural Resources Committee, and Committee Members

### **Comment in Support of H 7562**

An Act Relating to Fish and Wildlife- Furbearing Animals  
Before the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee

April 1, 2024

Rhode Island Farm Bureau Federation is an independent, non-governmental grassroots organization made up of farmers and others with agricultural interests. Today our over 1200 RIFB members are not only large farmers and small farmers but also include those engaged in agricultural industries, teachers of agriculture, and consumers.

The Rhode Island Farm Bureau would like to thank Representative Noret and the bill's other sponsors for submitting **H 7562**. This legislation would task RI DEM with promulgating the list of furbearers for Chapter 20-16, with the rules and regulations governing hunting seasons and limits already being promulgated by the Department of Environmental Management.

Farming is an industry that faces many challenges in producing agricultural commodities. Farmers operate on a thin margin, which means every part of their crop is critical to their farm's survival. In Rhode Island, we are frequently affected by climate as evidenced by recent years with drought and near-flooding rain cycles, both of which can damage crops and hay fields across the state.

Most people are familiar with deer depredation of crops, however, over the last two decades we have seen black bears reestablish a population in Rhode Island. Livestock including chickens, rabbits, sheep, and goats are subject to depredation by black bears. In addition to livestock, black bears are unsurprisingly attracted to beehives and can destroy a large number of hives in an evening. Sweet corn is another favorite of the black bear, and they can cause considerable damage to a field as they pick and choose their way through it.

While farmers understand the need to utilize fencing and other physical means to protect crops and livestock from black bears, there are situations in which bears become too much of a nuisance and defeat these devices. In Rhode Island, farmers cannot be issued a depredation permit for black bears if they are harming livestock or destroying crops because black bears are not among the species listed in state statute. As our state's climate changes, the species living here will change as well. Passage of **H 7562** would help farmers to lawfully protect their farm's investment by allowing the RI DEM Division of Fish and Wildlife to adapt the list of furbearers as their wildlife biologists and scientists determine necessary to effectively manage all species in our state.

We ask your support for **H 7562**,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Henry B. Wright III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Henry B. Wright III  
President, RI Farm Bureau