



QUALITY DEER MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

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Date: 20 March 2017
To: Environmental Conservation Committee
From: Kip Adams, Director of Conservation
Re: Assembly Bill 477

On behalf of the Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA) I am writing to support Assembly Bill 477 which would lower the age for universal hunting licenses from 14 years old to 12 years old. The QDMA is a national nonprofit wildlife conservation organization dedicated to ensuring the future of white-tailed deer, wildlife habitat and our hunting heritage. The QDMA has over 60,000 members nationwide, and our membership includes hunters, landowners and natural resource professionals.

Hunters play an important role in New York's societal and economic well being. Hunters provide a free ecological service to society by managing wildlife populations and provide more than \$3.6 billion annually to New York's economy. Unfortunately, the number of hunters in New York is decreasing. The number of licensed hunters in New York in 2011 was 13 percent below the state's 20-year average. New York has one of the most restrictive age requirements in the U.S. and regulations that limit youth participation have an impact on a state's ability to attract new hunters.

In contrast, most states with lower age restrictions have higher hunter replacement ratios and recruit more youth. Twelve of 16 (75%) states considered "least restrictive" with regards to age requirements by the U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance had hunter replacement ratios above the national average. Four of these states recruited ≥ 1 hunter for each one they lost!

Safety is paramount to the future of hunting and this is especially true with regard to youth participation. Fortunately, research clearly shows hunting is safe. American Sports Data, Inc. conducted an extensive study in 2002 that examined more than 100 sports and activities. Twenty-eight activities, including cheerleading and aerobics, had higher injury rates than hunting. Hunting is safe and supervised youth are among the safest hunters. National statistics show that supervised youth hunters compose only a fraction of the hunting-related firearms incidents that occur annually.

New York is losing hunters and sportsmen's dollars. Increasing the number of youth hunters will combat these issues and Assembly Bill 477 will help increase youth participation. Thank you for your commitment to New York's natural resources.

Respectfully,

Kip Adams
Director of Conservation