

# NATIONAL DEER ASSOCIATION

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19 March, 2021

Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins  
188 State Street  
Legislative Office Building, Room 907  
Albany, NY 12247

Assemblymember Carl E. Heastie  
188 State Street  
Legislative Office Building, Room 932  
Albany, NY 12247

RE: Support for Transportation, Economic Development and Environmental Conservation Part X – Crossbow and Hunting Age Provisions – in the FY 2022 Executive Budget

Dear Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Heastie:

On behalf of the National Deer Association (NDA), I am writing to provide our comments on Governor Andrew Cuomo's recently released Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Executive Budget, which outlines policy and funding priorities for the coming year. Among those proposals is an effort to expand outdoor recreation programming to promote COVID-19 safe recreation. We respectfully ask the New York Senate and Assembly to include in the final budget the related items found in Transportation, Economic Development and Environmental Conservation Part X.

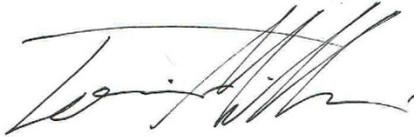
Last year, participation in hunter safety training courses increased by 175% in New York, and the state is now looking to expand hunting opportunities in 2021 and beyond. To do this, the Governor's office recommends expanding crossbow use to regular big game seasons, and allowing junior hunters ages 12-13 to hunt big game with a rifle or shotgun when under the supervision of a parent, guardian, or mentor. Senate staff analyses estimate that these hunting expansion provisions could provide an additional \$2 million in yearly revenue from increased hunting license fees. Additionally, the use of crossbows for all hunting seasons is supported in the 2012-2016 Department of Conservation (DEC) Deer Management Plan and is a recommendation in the Draft 2021-2025 Deer Management Plan that was released in December 2020.

NDA supports the inclusion of crossbows as a legal method of take for deer and other species within appropriate seasons, wherever practical and possible, and we especially support the use of crossbows if their use positively impacts a deer management program and helps recruit and retain more hunters. New York, as evidenced by hunter participation last year, has a great opportunity to efficiently recruit, retain and reactivate hunters and conservationists for years to come.

The Executive Budget also recommends allowing junior hunters ages 12-13 to hunt big game with a rifle or shotgun when under the supervision of a parent, guardian, or mentor. Currently, hunters must be at least 14 years old to hunt deer and bear with a firearm. NDA and our members greatly support establishing a universal hunting age of 12 in New York. Most states allow hunters at least 12 years of age to hunt big game with the supervision of a parent, guardian, or mentor. Engaging youth in big game hunting at a young age and with appropriate supervision goes a long way in developing life-long hunters and conservationists. Further, there is no data to suggest that doing so is unsafe.

Please support expanded outdoor recreation programming to promote COVID-19 safe recreation in 2021 and beyond via these important hunting and conservation provisions. Expanding the use of crossbows should provide a positive impact to New York's deer management program and help recruit and retain more hunters. Allowing junior hunters ages 12 and up to hunt big game when under appropriate supervision will go a long way in developing life-long hunters and conservationists. Again, we respectfully ask you to keep Transportation, Economic Development and Environmental Conservation Part X in the final version of the FY 2022 Executive Budget.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Torin Miller', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Torin Miller  
*Director of Policy*