



TESTIMONY IN **OPPOSITION** TO **SB 586**  
AN ACT AUTHORIZING BLACK BEAR HUNTING IN LITCHFIELD COUNTY

February 27, 2019

**To:** Honored Chairs Sen. Cohen and Rep. Demicco and Distinguished Members of the Environment Committee

**From:** Lori Brown, Connecticut League of Conservation Voters

On behalf of the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters (CTLCV), thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony **IN OPPOSITION to SB 586**, An Act Authorizing Black Bear Hunting in Litchfield County.

**CTLCV strongly opposes opening Litchfield County to bear hunting.** Connecticut's black bears are a critical to our ecosystem. Their numbers are small and they are slow to reproduce, making them particularly vulnerable should Connecticut authorize hunting. We have seen horrific consequences of bear hunting in other states, such as New Jersey—where the hunting was reckless, brutal, and indiscriminate—and Florida—where the hunt had to be stopped when too many bears were slaughtered in the first year. These incidents should raise serious concerns about implementing this legislation.

**Overhunting black bears is extremely damaging to our local ecosystems.** Black bears regulate insect populations and help disperse seeds. With insect-borne illnesses like West Nile and Lyme on the rise, we cannot afford to remove their natural predators.

**At least ten scientific studies have demonstrated that recreational hunting does nothing to resolve human-bear conflicts.** According to a 2011 study in the *Journal of Wildlife and Management*, there is little correlation between black bear population and black bear attacks. Additionally, the study found that at least 38% of attacks were directly linked to poor food management practices by humans.

Proponents of hunting often cite “problem” bears that damage or destroy crops and property or threaten human lives. However, **Connecticut already has existing laws that would allow these problem bears to be destroyed.** Opening up our small bear population to a sustained hunt is a needless, kneejerk response to a problem that already had a solution.

Rather than resorting to inhumane and ecologically devastating hunts, **Connecticut should adopt an education-based public safety strategy.** We can humanely reduce conflicts between humans and bears by educating residents on removing attractants like spilled garbage or bird feeders, supervising and leashing small animals when outside, and wearing whistles while hiking to keep nearby wildlife at bay. In 2014, for instance, **Yosemite Park reported a 92% decrease in human-black bear conflicts due to education programs.**

CTL CV support efforts to investigate nonlethal bear management strategies, like the proposed **SB 894**. These studies should focus on rigorous public education.

Hunting is not the solution to reducing conflicts between bears and humans—it would only leave us vulnerable to potentially devastating ecological consequences. **SB 586** does not serve the best interests of the public or the environment. On behalf of CTL CV, I urge you to **VOTE NO on SB 586** in order to protect our bears from a hunting frenzy, and preserve our wildlife for future generations.

Thank you for your consideration as you deliberate on SB 586.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lori Brown". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Lori Brown**

Executive Director

CTL CV

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