February 24, 2022
Colorado General Assembly
House Agriculture, Livestock, & Water Committee
200 E Colfax
Denver, CO 80202

Dear Chair McCormick and Member of the House Agriculture, Livestock, & Water Committee:

We, the undersigned organizations, write to you on behalf of tens-of-thousands of Colorado Hunters, anglers, conservationists, and outdoor enthusiasts to share our collective support of House Bill 22-1168, Public School Hunter Education Seventh Grade Course.

The Colorado Parks and Wildlife’s (CPW) Hunter Education Program has had profound success in the reduction of hunting-related fatalities and accidents since its mandatory implementation in 1970. Since implementation over 900,000 students have been certified through the educational course and subsequently non-fatal incidents have dropped to a historical low averaging four incidents per year.

The benefits of hunter education extend far beyond the immediate sportsperson community. The curriculum is an expansive array of material covering the topics of personal preparedness, responsibility, ethics, and wildlife conservation, all of which are highly relevant life skills that can be utilized by anyone venturing into the outdoors. Furthermore, hunter education gives students and their parents the confidence to spend time afield which has been shown to provide immense physical and mental health benefits.

While there are opportunities for interested individuals to participate in hunter education courses outside of the academic setting, those programs generally occur after hours and on weekends. If a student's parent(s) is unable or unavailable to take them to and from the classes, their youthful curiosity and budding interest is quickly stifled. HB22-1168 directly addresses these barriers to participation by allowing public school seventh graders the opportunity to take hunter education as an elective with parental approval. Students would no longer be inadvertently excluded from taking hunter education based on parent work schedules or socioeconomic limitations, allowing young adults the freedom to explore their curiosity in a safe and supervised manner.

While HB22-1168 does not mandate that hunter education be offered in public schools, it does allow the public schools to pick what is best for their students in choosing whether to offer it as an elective. Furthermore, HB22-1168 requires that the program be offered for free to the school and students, is taught by an instructor certified by the Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), satisfies the same requirements as a hunter’s education course certified by CPW, and offers students the opportunity to opt-out of any hands-on activities without penalty. Overall, the opportunity to offer hunter education in public schools is a worthwhile investment in our youth to provide increased access, opportunity, and safety in the outdoors.

For the above stated reasons we respectfully request that you vote “Yes” on HB22-1168. By offering hunter education in public schools, it provides many students with a learning opportunity that they would not have had otherwise. While simply participating in a hunter’s
education program does not automatically turn an individual into a lifelong hunter, it does provide them with critical knowledge and skill sets that they will be able to carry with them for the remainder of their lives as the future stewards of Colorado’s wildlife.

Sincerely,
Members of the Colorado Wildlife Conservation Project

CC: Representative Hugh McKean
    Representative Kyle Mullica
    Senator Rob Woodward
    Department of Natural Resources Executive Director Dan Gibbs
    Colorado Parks and Wildlife Director Dan Prenzlow