



To: **Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture**
24 Beacon St.
Room 215
Boston, MA 02133

Re: **House Bill 849 – An Act Prohibiting the Sale of Fur Products**
Senate Bill 509 – An Act Prohibiting the Sale of Fur Products

Position: **Oppose**

Date: **November 8, 2023**

Honorable Members of the House Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture,

My name is Fred Bird, and I am the Northeastern States Assistant Manager for the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF). I respectfully urge you to oppose House Bill 849 (H.B. 849) and Senate Bill 509 (S. 509) – legislation that neglects to acknowledge the unique and irreplaceable role that trapping occupies in mitigating wildlife damage, managing predator and furbearer populations, protecting threatened ecosystems, and serving as an integral component of modern wildlife management. The passage of H.B. 849 and S. 509 would undoubtedly have negative repercussions on the time-honored tradition of recreational trapping.

Founded in 1989, CSF is the informed authority across outdoor issues and serves as the primary conduit for influencing public policy. Working with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC), and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), CSF gives a voice to hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers on Capitol Hill and throughout state capitols advocating on vital outdoor issues that are the backbone of our nation's conservation legacy.

Regulated trapping is one of the cornerstones of modern wildlife management. The varying devices used in recreational trapping have been strictly evaluated for their efficiency, selectivity, practicality, safety, and humaneness and can be utilized to address a multitude of different management applications. In Massachusetts, trapping is highly regulated in accordance with the authority found in M.G.L. c. 131, § 5, and subject to 321 CMR 3.02(5). Trappers are required to successfully complete Trapper Education. The Massachusetts course includes the training required to use Bailey and Hancock traps (live catch beaver traps). Both a Trapper Education Certificate and a Bailey-Hancock Certificate are issued to students who successfully complete a Massachusetts Trapper Education course. Additionally, Massachusetts trappers

are limited to using cage or box traps, common rat traps for the taking of weasels and Baily and Hancock traps for beaver. All other traditional steel jawed, and body gripping traps are prohibited in the Bay State. These restrictions alone should serve to alleviate any concern of harm being done to a non-target species. The sale of pelts, fur, is also currently highly regulated in Massachusetts. Raw Pelts of coyote, wild fox, wild mink, gray wolf, bobcat, lynx, fisher, marten, river otter, or beaver may not be sold in Massachusetts unless tagged by the state or province of origin.

Extensive research on restraining traps has been conducted through annual appropriations from Congress to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Since 1996, Best Management Practices (BMPs) have incorporated trapping methods developed from this research for fur-bearing species. All common trap designs have been field tested for each species and all captured animals were examined by veterinarians. State fish and wildlife agencies have adopted these BMPs through their regulatory processes to ensure that the most effective, selective, and humane technology is being used by trappers. Trapping is a highly regulated activity, and the sportsmen's community has supported both the vigorous enforcement of the relevant laws and the implementation of severe penalties for illegalities.

MassWildlife relies on the assistance of trappers for species population control, data collection, depredation mitigation, and human-wildlife conflict resolution. Trapping is the most effective method for managing nuisance animals, such as coyotes, that prey on livestock. Without the ability to sell the fur from trapped wildlife without undue hardship, the practice of trapping itself may decrease, while the burden on MassWildlife to manage these species would only increase, requiring additional personnel, resources, and money to fulfill the role that the trapping community currently pays the state to occupy.

Trapping is a tool often utilized by professional wildlife managers to collect critical data in monitoring population dynamics of a variety of wildlife species from year to year. Without this data, managers would not be able to accurately assess the short-term and long-term health of numerous wildlife populations. Furthermore, trapping is an irreplaceable conservation tool in wildlife damage management programs that involve the eradication of invasive species that cause extensive habitat degradation and threaten ecosystem health. Properly regulated and monitored traps minimize potential for non-target capture and restore ecosystems to better support abundant, healthy, and sustainable native wildlife populations.

As conflicts between people and wildlife inevitably arise (e.g. a rabid fox, coyote in a chicken coop, etc.) and wildlife management projects continue, trapping will have to occur on some level. By disallowing law-abiding trappers from selling the pelts without incurring additional costs, H.B. 849 and S. 590 are mandating wanton waste behavior and criminalizing trappers and hunters from utilizing a harvested animal to its fullest potential. Restricting the sale of fur products does nothing but undermine the practice of recreational trapping.

Lastly, the prohibition on the sale of fur products in the Commonwealth as defined would have negative consequences outside of Massachusetts extending to ecommerce and out of state businesses who make clothing and products from their legal harvests. This prohibition would have negative effects on artisans and legal trappers alike.

Acknowledging these negative impacts of H.B. 849 and S 509, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation stands in firm opposition. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this issue. If you have any questions on this topic, or any other sporting-related issues, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fred Bird', with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

Fred Bird

Assistant Manager, Northeast States | Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

110 North Carolina Ave, SE | Washington, DC 20003

fbird@congressionalsportsmen.org | 603-583-7484