



April 24, 2023

The Honorable Antonio J. Portantino, Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Room 412
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 772 – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Portantino:

The undersigned wildlife conservation organizations are pleased to strongly support SB 772 (Dahle), legislation which would extend the age eligibility to acquire a California junior hunting license from 15 years of age and under to 17 years of age and under. Raising the eligibility age just two years to 17 years and under will significantly lower the cost of a hunting license and associated permits to youth of the formative ages of 16 and 17 years – substantially increasing their ability to participate in hunting during that time, and the likelihood they will become life-long hunters and financial contributors to California's wildlife management for years to come.

There has been a 65% decrease in the number of hunting licenses purchased in California since 1970. This decrease, combined with associated declines in the sale of stamps and related permits, has resulted in serious reductions in annual funding made available to the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) to fulfill their public trust wildlife management responsibilities. To address this serious revenue shortfall, DFW has actively promoted hunter education courses, administered programs aimed at providing special youth (apprentice) hunting opportunities, enhanced general public hunting opportunity via the Shared Habitat for Recreational Enhancement (SHARE) Program and much more. Although these efforts have been successful in many ways, they have failed to reverse the decline in hunting participation and the associated

conservation and revenue benefits hunting provides. To further address this concern, DFW is currently actively partnering with leaders in the conservation community in an effort called the “Hunting and Fishing Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation (R3) Program.” The goal of this effort is to identify barriers to participation in these activities and to develop a plan to address those barriers. Two of the barriers identified which impact the ability of youth to participate in hunting activities, especially those who are poor and disadvantaged, are cost and limited opportunity.

SB 772 would take a large step towards addressing both concerns. First, with the current cost of a California junior hunting license offered at a significantly lower price (\$14.30) than an adult hunting license (\$54.00), SB 772 will make hunting much more affordable for many families. Second, a junior hunting license offers young people the opportunity to participate in numerous high quality “apprentice” hunting activities offered by DFW and nonprofit wildlife conservation groups. By increasing the age eligibility of a junior license, SB 772 would allow youth to take advantage of these exciting outdoor opportunities for two more years and, as noted above, significantly increase the likelihood they will become lifelong hunters and contributors to our state’s wildlife management efforts.

In addition, by increasing the junior hunting license age eligibility to 17 years of age and younger, SB 772 would bring hunting licenses in line with California law which generally deems someone as an “adult” at 18 years. Further, in 2016 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service increased the age eligibility for youth waterfowl hunts from 15 to 17 years of age.

Increasing the eligible age for holding a junior hunting license from 15 years of age and under to 17 years of age and under would allow and encourage more of California’s youth and their families to step outdoors and appreciate and support our wildlife and their habitats now and far into the future.

For all the above reasons, we urge your strong support of SB 772 when the bill comes before your Senate Appropriations Committee on Monday, May 1st.

Sincerely,

Ryan Bronson, Director of Government Affairs
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Don Martin, President
California Chapter – Wild Sheep Foundation

Lori Jacobs, President
California Houndsmen for Conservation

Adam Chavez, President
California Hawking Club

Steve Jarvis, Chief Executive Officer
California Deer Association

Steve Chappell, Executive Director
Suisun Resource Conservation District

Fred Harpster, President
Black Brant Group

Mark Hennelly, Vice President of Government Relations
California Waterfowl Association

Steve Miller, President
Tulare Basin Wetlands Association

Gary F. Brennan, President
San Diego County Wildlife Federation

Corey Thompson, President
Cal-Ore Wetland and Waterfowl Council

Chriss Bowles, President
California Bowmen Hunters/State Archery Association

James Stone, President
Nor-Cal Guides & Sportsmen's Association

Rick Travis, Legislative Director
California Rifle & Pistol Association

Devin O'Dea, California Chapter Coordinator
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers

Ric Ortega, General Manager
Grassland Water District

Lisa C. McNamee, Legislative Coordinator
California Chapters – Safari Club International

Keely Hopkins, Western States Coordinator
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

Marc Engstrom, Director of Public Policy, California
Ducks Unlimited

Wayne Wickham, President
Sacramento Chapter - Safari Club International

Clark Smith, President
San Francisco Bay Area Chapter - Safari Club International

Dawnita Harwood, President
California State Chapter – National Wild Turkey Federation

cc: Members, Senate Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Senator Brian Dahle