



# Empire State Forest Products Association

*The people behind New York's healthy forests and quality wood products*

*www.esfpa.org*

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## **Memorandum of Support** **S 2611**

Honorable Joseph Griffo  
Senator  
413 Capital  
Albany, NY 12247

March 21, 2023

Dear Senator Griffo:

The Empire State Forest Products Association (ESFPA) supports **S 2611** as it encourages more recreational sport hunting, brings more youth into sport hunting, and addresses one of the largest threats to forest regeneration because of over browsing by deer.

The Empire State Forest Products Association (ESFPA) represents over 350 member businesses, industries and landowners engaged in forest resource production and stewardship of New York's 19 million acres of forest. In total, \$22.8 billion dollars in annual industry production and nearly 100,000 jobs are attributable to operations of various industries within the forest related sectors. There are over 200,000 private forest landowners who also depend on sound forest and timber management and production to help them keep their forests as forests.

ESFPA supports these proposals to allow all junior hunters ages 12-15 to hunt small and big game with a muzzleloader, rifle or shotgun when accompanied by a parent, guardian, or mentor. Under existing law, junior hunters are authorized to hunt small game with a rifle or shotgun and big game with a bow when under supervision of a licensed adult mentor. The bill now allow youth to use rifles, shotguns, muzzle loaders, bows and crossbows.

In the Governor's 2024 Executive Budget Proposal she includes a similar provision for making permanent the Youth Hunting Pilot Program.

The inaugural 2021 expanded youth hunt pilot was a great success. Reports from participating families indicated participants were safe while afield and greatly enjoyed the opportunity to learn from experienced hunting mentors. Mentors reported having important experiences sharing long-held traditions with their youth partners and shared stories of the lessons taught regarding safe, ethical hunting and conservation. Further, this additional hunting opportunity increased conservation fund resources and provided another important tool to advance deer management objectives. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) review of hunting-related shooting incidents (HRSIs) found that youth hunters are the safest group of hunters; the first year of the pilot continued that tradition with zero HRSIs.

The second year of the pilot has proven to be as successful, safe, and popular as the first. Once again, DEC heard from families across the state who were thrilled to share their longstanding tradition of wildlife conservation and food sustainability with young family members. In its report in February 2023, DEC is recommending that youth hunting becomes permanent in New York.

Deer are one of the most significant threats to forest regeneration in our state. It is estimated that over 50% of the forest in New York do not have sufficient regeneration to fully recover after disturbance of the forest canopy. The most successful way to decrease the over population of deer is through hunting and this proposal will increase the number of hunters for deer. The proposal also introduces hunting a lower age which should impact the number of lifetime hunters for years to come. In 2020, in large part due to the COVID-19 pandemic we saw significant increases in hunting as people sought more recreational opportunities that could be done while maintaining social distancing. Hunting is a tremendous sport and introduces youth to the forest and forest wildlife that reside there. It also teaches youth responsible hunting and how hunting is a major tool for wildlife and forest management.

We support this legislation and would encourage you to work with the Governor and Senate Finance Committees to get the Governor's proposals enacted within the 2024 Budget legislation.

**For More Information Contact:**

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cc: Senate Environmental Conservation Committee Members  
Senate Finance Committee Members