



New York State Conservation Council Inc.
8 East Main Street, Ilion, New York 13357-1899

MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT

Bill # **A 477** Gunther

Same as **S 3156** Griffo

Title: Amend the environmental conservation law in relation to lowering the age for universal hunting licenses from fourteen years old to twelve years old.

This proposal would allow junior hunters to take big game with firearms at age twelve under the supervision of an experienced hunter. Currently, juniors can hunt small game with a firearm at twelve years of age and big game at fourteen.

Justification:

The NYSCC strongly supports the expansion of opportunities for youth to hunt big game. Enabling more young people to hunt big game with a firearm can foster lifelong participation in this outdoor sport thus increasing the number of hunters and maintaining their role in managing deer populations across the state.

The DEC's current five-year deer management plan strongly recommends that the minimum age for big game hunting with a firearm be lowered to twelve. Nationally, all states allow youth age twelve to hunt big game with a firearm and 60% have a lower minimum age. Young hunters are travelling to adjacent states to hunt deer and bear.

Since 1991, youth have been able to hunt small game with a firearm at twelve years of age. In 2008, the minimum age for hunting big game with a firearm was reduced from sixteen to fourteen. This change would complete the process of bringing New York in line with all other states.

Concurrent with the 2008 change, New York established the Mentored Youth Hunting Program which provided for supervision by experienced hunters in order to develop a strong safety ethic in young hunters. The results from this program and from other states show that mentored young hunters are clearly among the safest groups afield.

These changes have had a positive impact on the young hunters and their families, participation in outdoor sports, state and local economies and funding for natural resources protection.

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