

March 6th, 2023

Washington House of Representatives
416 Sid Snyder Ave, SW
Olympia, WA 98504

RE: House Bill 1143

To the Honorable Members of the Washington House of Representatives,

The below signed conservation organizations would like to share our concerns with House Bill 1143 (HB 1143)– legislation that would require a 10-day waiting period on firearm purchases, impose training requirements on Washington’s law-abiding hunters and recreational shooters, and establish an exhaustive permitting process for the lawful transfer of firearms. Ducks Unlimited Inc., Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and other listed organizations represent the interests of hundreds of thousands of youth and families that believe in safe gun ownership and enjoy the tradition of hunting with firearms in Washington.

Washington’s hunters and recreational shooters have been the primary funders of state level conservation for more than 85 years. Through the American System of Conservation Funding, hunting license fees go directly back into conservation by the State to protect lands, waters, and habitats important to Washington’s wildlife. Also, the Pittman-Robertson Act of 1937 dedicated an excise tax on firearms and ammunition that contributes millions of dollars each year directly into state conservation efforts. Washington hunters and recreational shooters are proud to contribute to these funds when purchasing our firearms and licenses. Unfortunately, the redundant and onerous training requirements of HB 1143 will result in fewer new hunters and recreational shooters enjoying this outdoor sport and a loss of important revenue for conservation.

HB 1143 ignores the fact that Washington’s hunters already partake in the excellent gun safety training offered by the state through the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife at <https://www.hunter-ed.com/washington/>. This thorough training, which youth and new hunters take to obtain their hunting licenses, includes hunting ethics and the safe handling of firearms, as well as “live fire” demonstrations as envisioned in HB 1143. Duplicative training requirements, increased costs, and the lengthy permitting process all create additional barriers to entry for hunting in Washington, thereby also diminishing the positive impact that hunting has on Washington’s natural habitats and the fish and wildlife they support.

In November of 2022, Measure 114 narrowly passed in Oregon with 50.7% of the vote and contained similar language to HB 1143. Because Oregon, like Washington, lacks the shooting range capacity, trainers, and resources to establish a gun safety training required by Measure 114, it would have unfortunately resulted in the complete halt of all gun sales in the state had there not been multiple lawsuits. Without several injunctions in place, the result to our hunting families’ traditions and conservation funding would have been devastating.

Surely, the intent of the HB 1143 is not to end the lawful act of hunting in Washington enjoyed by our diverse communities and passed along through generations of families dedicated to conservation, but to promote safe gun ownership. We share the interests of promoting safe firearm ownership and we hope you will work closely with our community to find positive opportunities to do so without diminishing the

recruitment and retention of hunters and recreational shooters in Washington that are vital for the future of conservation funding in our state. As you move forward on firearms-related bills, please feel free to contact us through Matt Little at Ducks Unlimited, mlittle@ducks.org or Keely Hopkins with Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, khopkins@congressionalsportsmen.org.

Sincerely,

Joe Kondelis
American Bear Foundation

Keely Hopkins
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

Matt Little
Ducks Unlimited

Charles Whitwam
HOWL for Wildlife

Marie Neumiller
Inland Northwest Wildlife Council

Alex Baier
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Torin Miller
National Deer Association

Russ McDonald
National Wild Turkey Federation

Dale Magart
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Chris Tymeson
Safari Club International