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## **Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 39**

*Assembly Committee on Forestry, Parks and Outdoor Recreation*

Tuesday, April 2, 2019

Mr. Chairman and committee members, thank you for holding this public hearing today and giving me the opportunity to speak to you in support of Assembly Bill (AB) 39. I would like to thank Senator Petrowski for working with me on this important legislation.

Deer hunting is one of Wisconsin's most important sporting traditions. Thousands of Wisconsinites take to the woods each fall throughout the various deer hunting seasons. Prior to the hunt, many hunters invest a great deal of time, energy, and money preparing for the season. When someone illegally harvests a deer, they are taking an opportunity away from a law-abiding hunter.

Hunters also provide an important economic boost to many small businesses around our state. As a small business owner in northern Wisconsin, I have seen this impact first-hand. Actions that negatively impact hunting also harm the many businesses who depend on the hunting-related business.

When someone illegally harvests a deer, one of the penalties that a judge may impose is the wild animal protection surcharge. Funds generated from this surcharge are deposited in the Conservation Fund which helps fund enforcement at the Department of Natural Resources. Under current law, the surcharge for illegally harvesting a deer is only \$43.75 no matter how extreme the act of poaching or the number of resources expended by the department to investigate.

AB 39 increases judicial discretion in deer poaching cases by allowing a judge to impose a wild animal protection surcharge anywhere in the range of \$43.75 to \$5,000. This increased flexibility will allow judges to impose a higher surcharge in extreme cases of poaching where law enforcement was forced to spend a significant amount of resources investigating an act of poaching or in cases where an individual is simply not deterred by the current penalties.

Mr. Chairman and members, I ask for your support of AB 39 and thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today.