



QUALITY DEER MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

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Date: 2 February 2018
To: Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
From: Kip Adams, Director of Conservation
Re: Senate Bill 137

On behalf of the Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA) I am writing to support Senate Bill 137 which would expand South Dakota's mentored hunting program by removing the minimum age requirement to participate. The QDMA is a national nonprofit wildlife conservation organization dedicated to ensuring the future of white-tailed deer, wildlife habitat and our hunting heritage. The QDMA has over 60,000 members nationwide, and our membership includes hunters, landowners and natural resource professionals.

Hunters play an important role in South Dakota's societal and economic well being. Hunters provide a free ecological service to society by managing wildlife populations and provide more than \$293 million annually to South Dakota's economy. Unfortunately, the number of hunters in South Dakota is decreasing. The number of licensed deer hunters in South Dakota in 2017 was 13 percent fewer than in 2007. Removing restrictive age requirements can help a state's ability to attract new hunters.

Safety is paramount to the future of hunting and this is especially true with regard to youth participation. Fortunately, research clearly shows hunting is safe. American Sports Data, Inc. conducted an extensive study in 2002 that examined more than 100 sports and activities. Twenty-eight activities, including cheerleading and aerobics, had higher injury rates than hunting. Hunting is safe and supervised youth are among the safest hunters. National statistics show that supervised youth hunters compose only a fraction of the hunting-related firearms incidents that occur annually.

South Dakota is losing hunters and sportsmen's dollars. Increasing the number of youth hunters will combat these issues and Senate Bill 137 will help increase youth participation. Thank you for your commitment to South Dakota's natural resources.

Respectfully,

Kip Adams
Director of Conservation