



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 **A 3216/S 4119**

Honorable Aileen Gunther
Member of Assembly
826 LOB
Albany, NY 12248

Honorable Joseph Griffo
Senator
413 Capital
Albany, NY 12247

February 7, 2021

Dear Assembly Member Gunther and Senator Griffo:

The Empire State Forest Products Association (ESFPA) supports **A 3216/S 4119** as 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 300 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 bills now allow youth to use rifles, shotguns, muzzle loaders, bows and crossbows.

In the Governor's 2022 Executive Budget Proposal he includes a similar provision for expanded hunting but would also remove requirements that junior hunters and mentors may only hunt from ground level. With tree stands that enable two hunters to sit together it would seem reasonable that the junior hunter and mentor could hunt safely from a tree stand.

In addition, the Governor's proposal expands crossbow use in all big game seasons (including early and late bow seasons). Users would be required to take a bowhunting education course in addition to hunter safety training.

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 Assembly Ways & Means and Senate Finance Committees to get these bills and the Governor's proposals enacted within the 2022 Budget legislation.

For More Information Contact:

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cc: Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee Members
Assembly Ways & Means Committee Members
Senate Environmental Conservation Committee Members
Senate Finance Committee Members