

Boozhoo.

I struggled with what to ultimately say here today, knowing that many before me have appealed to Representative McBroom and others who are pushing for a Wolf Hunt to take seriously the importance of adhering to careful science, with an eye towards the inherent worth and benefits of biodiverse, thriving ecosystems, where the wolf is both apex predator and keystone species. It has been clearly explained that the oft-sighted number of 200 was never intended as a cap, but rather as a goal that likely seemed aspirational and optimistic, compared to the 6 animals that remained after dark decades of poisoning and killing these intelligent animals for sport and bounty. SCR-7's claim that "a managed wolf hunt in the state is a viable means of ensuring stable wolf population numbers" is rendered senseless by the fact that the wolves themselves have stabilized at around 700 over the course of the past decade. The packs do not need our help to ensure their stable numbers, aside from a committed moral decision to allow them their lives. SCR-7's statement that "wolf hunting allows the wolf population to be kept at levels that ensure the overall survival of the animal" is deeply flawed. Though prey populations such as deer certainly benefit from a judicious thinning of the herd as performed by wolves who target the sick and the infirm, we have seen that the killing of wolves does nothing to ensure the overall survival of the packs. Quite the opposite. Since the politicized Federal delisting, wolf populations have dropped precipitously in various state's reactionary rush to unnecessarily kill them, using unethical means that ultimately shame and degrade hunting as a noble pursuit linked to subsistence. I am moved to remind everyone listening that we do not need to kill, just because we can.

SCR-7 also fails to meet the obligations of government-to-government tribal consultation. Among the 12 federally recognized tribes of Michigan, our tribal leadership is unanimous in advocating for non-lethal approaches that commit to coexistence. As written, no mention is made of the necessity and requirement for tribal consultation, which in itself is sufficient to reject SCR-7's advancement, unless it is to be decided that just two co-sponsors hold more sway in decision making that affects our treaty rights and lands than the entirety of our sovereign tribal nations. I will assume in good faith that this was not the intention of the author or the co-sponsor.

There is clearly a need for more public education when it comes to wolves. There are already ways to avoid and reduce conflicts, so if that information is not widely known or taught, that should be seen as an opportunity. The people who live among the wolves could be valuable sources of conservation efforts and data gathering and even at the front-lines of a potentially lucrative ecotourism economy that views wolves as the crown jewel. I often hear those who want a Wolf Hunt allude to a sense of loss of "their way of life." I will respond that the Anishinaabek people, and all the indigenous nations of these lands, know a little something about that. On the one hand, hunters who were once accustomed to overpopulated deer made less wary without the presence of wolves may indeed miss the days of an easy kill. But on the other hand, maybe a particular aspect of that way of life, where whatever seems inconvenient in the short-term is simply removed or wiped out without consideration of the long-term repercussions, needs to be left behind. Please realize that the easy deer kill comes at a cost -

not only increased diseases like CWD and overgrazing of stabilizing vegetation, but also the terrible cost of killing the wolves. For my ancestors and the many of my indigenous relatives today who adhere to our spiritual traditions, there is a deep understanding of Ma'iingan, the wolf, as sacred, necessary to our cultural continuity and sovereignty, because central to a way of life based upon humility and gratitude. Our fates are intertwined.

Pitting people against one another isn't doing anyone any favors. What is required is a good faith, transparent commitment to assuring the long-term ecological diversity that is necessary for thriving wildlife communities able to be enjoyed into the future. Our collective focus should be on how to maximize the benefits of coexistence. Wolves are stewards of biodiversity, and deserve an evolved approach that respects their role, and empowers all people to be partners in the recovery of balanced ecosystems. So, I'm asking you to open your minds and your hearts to the long-term benefits and intrinsic value of living wolves. Leave behind the flawed and limited thinking in SCR-7 and let us go forward to better ensure true security and agency by stewarding our natural inheritance for the benefit of the next 7 generations of people and wildlife.

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Nichole Biber, Ph.D.

LTBB Odawa

nicholebiber@gmail.com

616-745-9954

1037 Blanchette Dr.
East Lansing, MI 48223