

ALLOW PURCHASE OF ADDITIONAL LICENSES WITH MENTORED YOUTH HUNTING LICENSE

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House Bill 4957 (H-2) as reported from committee
Sponsor: Rep. Gary Howell
Committee: Natural Resources
Complete to 10-13-17

Analysis available at
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

(Enacted as Public Act 4 of 2018)

BRIEF SUMMARY: House Bill 4957 would amend Sections 43502 and 43520 of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (NREPA) by allowing individuals with a mentored youth hunting license to purchase additional hunting licenses.

FISCAL IMPACT: House Bill 4957 is likely to increase revenues for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), though the extent of this increase is uncertain. More information is provided below.

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Over the years, Michigan has been experiencing a decline in the number of hunters. According to the DNR, studies show that when individuals begin hunting at a young age, they will continue to hunt throughout their life. The Mentored Youth Hunting Program was created in 2011 to help introduce children to hunting. This bill seeks to expand the game species that individuals participating in the program are able to hunt.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

Currently, a mentored youth hunting license includes all of the following:

- Base hunting license
- Deer license
- All-species fishing license
- Spring and fall wild turkey hunting license
- Fur harvester's license

The bill would add that an individual who purchases a mentored youth hunting license may also purchase additional licenses, including, but not limited to, all of the following:

- Antlerless deer licenses under Section 43527a
- A bear hunting license under Section 43528
- An elk hunting license under Section 43529

Even though individuals would be able to purchase more licenses with the mentored youth hunting license, the individual would still have comply with all other current mentored youth hunting program requirements contained in Section 43517.

The bill would also update language throughout the two sections for clarity, including striking obsolete language that was last amended in Public Act 108 of 2013.

MCL 324.43502 and 324.43520

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Under current law, an individual may obtain a hunting license by showing proof of a previous hunting license or a certificate of the completion of hunter safety training.¹ An individual who does not have proof of a previous hunting license or a certificate of the completion of hunter safety training may only obtain an *apprentice license*.² An individual with this license must be accompanied by another individual who is at least 21 years old and who possesses a standard hunting license. Children under 10 years old may only hunt under the mentored youth hunting program, which requires the child be accompanied by a mentor who is at least 21 years old and possesses a valid hunting license other than an apprentice license.³

FISCAL INFORMATION:

The bill would allow individuals holding a mentored youth hunting license to be eligible to apply for an antlerless deer license, a bear hunting license, and an elk hunting license. However, all three of these big game licenses are subject to a lottery system to varying degrees, with the bear and elk hunting licenses being in very limited supply. In 2017 there were a total of 7,140 bear licenses awarded from 56,501 total applicants; 200 elk licenses were awarded from 40,892 total applicants. Increasing the pool of individuals eligible to apply for bear and elk licenses would not increase the number of these licenses available to be awarded. However, antlerless deer licenses are not as limited as bear and elk licenses, so the department may realize increased sales as a result of the bill. The sale of hunting and fishing licenses generated approximately \$63.2 million in FY 2016-17.

The bill is unlikely to affect costs for the department and would have no fiscal impact on local units of government.

ARGUMENTS:

For:

Supporters of the bill argue that by expanding the game species mentored youth are able to hunt, children would be further engaged in the experience of hunting. In addition, instead of waiting to hunt larger species with potentially unskilled hunters with an apprentice hunting license, children would be given the opportunity to learn how to safely hunt with experienced hunters as their mentors.

¹ MCL 324.43520(2)

² MCL 324.43520(4)

³ MCL 324.43517

Against:

No arguments were presented in opposition to the bill.

POSITIONS:

Representatives of the following organizations indicated support for the bill:

- Department of Natural Resources (10-3-17)
- Michigan United Conservation Clubs (10-3-17)
- Sportsmen's Alliance (10-11-17)
- Michigan Hunting Dog Federation (10-11-17)

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.