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SENATE FISH AND GAME
EXHIBIT NO. 3
DATE 3/8/05
BILL NO. HB 242

House Bill 242
March 8, 2005
Presented by Jeff Hagener
Senate Fish and Game Committee

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, for the record I am Jeff Hagener, Director of the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP).

During the 2003 license year, FWP received three requests for licenses for terminally ill youths. One child was under the age of 11 and was not able to participate due to age requirements for receiving a license and for hunters' safety education in 87-2-105. The other two terminally ill youths were able to purchase Outfitter Sponsored Nonresident Combination Licenses, but only because the Outfitter Sponsored licenses had not sold out. Both youths were successful in their hunts in Montana.

During the 2004 license year, FWP did not receive any requests for licensure for terminally ill youths.

As drafted, HB 242 would allow FWP to waive the age requirement as well as the hunter safety requirements for a terminally ill youth under 12 years of age wishing to purchase a Montana hunting license. This waiver may be provided to resident or nonresident youth who have been diagnosed with a terminal illness on a one-time basis, for only one hunting license. The terminally ill youth who is granted the waiver must be in the company of an adult in possession of a valid Montana hunting license or a licensed Montana outfitter and must conduct all hunting within the terms of the license issued.

FWP supports the intent of HB 242 to grant terminally ill youth the opportunity to experience hunting in Montana. We have worked with the sponsor of the bill to streamline it with amendments that would:

- Allow waiver of hunters' education requirements for any terminally ill youth under 18 years of age. As drafted the bill only allows the waiver for terminally ill youths under age 12.
- Allow issuance of a free resident or nonresident big game combination license for terminally ill youth under 18 years of age. Under the current bill draft, only terminally ill youth under 12 years of age would be eligible for a discounted license.

The joy we have seen on the faces of the terminally ill youths that have had the chance to hunt in Montana encourages us to do what we can to help in these tragic situations. We ask for your support for House Bill 242, with the sponsor's amendments.