



EXHIBIT 6
DATE 4/8/15
SB 395

**Testimony of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
on
Montana SB 395 – Creating an apprentice youth hunting certificate.**

By Blake Henning, RMEF, Missoula, MT

- The RMEF stands here today in support of SB 395 and the establishment of an apprentice youth hunting certificate for those between the ages of 10 and 18 years of age in MT.
- Our organization believes, along with several other groups here today including SCI, DU, NRA, NWTf, and others that establishment of this certificate would be another tool in the tool box of the state to continue to encourage and bring on additional hunters for the near and long-term. Hunters are the future of our wildlife conservation in the state.
- SB 395 is not a way around hunter education. This certificate simply allows a youth to try hunting, under the watchful eye of a mentor such as a parent, before going through the process of being certified through the hunter education program. A youth can use the apprentice license a maximum of 2 times and then, if they want to continue to hunt they need to go through hunter education, and I hope they do.
- The Families Afield or apprentice license as it is referred to here is in place in 35 other states. Kids that have gone through the apprentice program have a safety rate 5 times higher than the general hunting population.
- RMEF supports the Hunter Education Program. In MT, RMEF has donated more than \$25,000 to the program in the last two years. Nationally, we have donated over \$100,000 and we plan to do more in the upcoming years. Again, we are solidly behind hunter education and see the apprentice certificate as having a role as well.
- As the father of two daughters who are now in their late teens and early 20's, I believe this program would have been particularly beneficial for them and I would have used it to introduce them to hunting.
- Nationally, youth participation in hunting is declining. We are all probably too aware of the multitude of activities that our youth have to choose from today, as well as the distractions of social media. Let's give them every chance we can to engage in our hunting heritage for the long term.
- Thank you for the opportunity to comment.