SENATE FISH AND GAME
Exhibit No. 5
Date 3.17.2015
Bill No. SB 395

To: Senate Fish and Game Committee

From: Mac Minard
Executive Director, MOGA

Date: March 17, 2015

Re: Support for SB 395

Chairman Brendon and Members of the Committee,

My name is Mac Minard; I am the Executive Director of the Montana Outfitters and Guides Association and in that capacity represent 350 small businesses that offer outfitted hunting and fishing services in Montana.

Along with all of you I share a rich family history hunting and conservation. For the majority of my life I have been involved in hunting, fishing, trapping as a form of subsistence, recreation and for 30 years as a Fish and Game professional. I have served as a Hunter Education Instructor three states, my Father was a Hunter Education Instructor, my sister was a Hunter Education instructor and both my brothers are Hunter Education Instructors. I have raised two daughters who both enjoy hunting and I know first-hand the difficulties of managing competing interests of sports, school and friends and family time in the field and the barriers that exist.

I rise in support of SB 395 and offer my thanks Senator Blasdel for bringing this very important legislation forward.

Six Years Ago

The first time I rose in support of an Apprentice Hunting Bill was in 2009, HB 382, heard in the Senate Committee on this very day 6 years ago.

- **At that time Montana Ranked # 1 in hunter participation but we were in the basement with respect to hunter recruitment.** For every 100 hunters that quit hunting there were only 56 new hunters to replace them. We were on a glide path of decline that continues today.
- **Six years ago the Families Afield program had been implemented in 27 states and added 208,000 NEW Hunters.** Now that number has swelled to include 35 States and over 1.3 Million new hunters.

- **Six years ago Apprentice Hunters were the safest hunters in the field**, a statistical fact that remains true today with Mentored Apprentice hunters reported to be **over ~~4~~ 5 times safer** in the field then the overall hunting population at large.

Fresh Look at an Old Problem

SB 395 is a fresh look at an old problem. I commend Senator Blasdel and those who have worked to bring SB 395 forward in a manner that addresses past opposition arguments. Those arguments were heard and addressed:

- Under Section 1 sub part 2 - Mentor qualification and standards are included in the bill
- Under sub part 7 limitations are placed on the Apprentice Licensee by limiting the scope of use but retaining critical elements of opportunity. Apprentice hunters may not put in for
  - limited permits,
  - an elk license (unless 15 years or older)
  - hound training license.
- Mentors will suffer stiff penalties should provisions of SB 395 be violated
- In addition to the regular price schedule for hunting license and tags, which will be a positive economic driver, **Sub part 4 sets a fee of $5 for the apprentice certificate and ear marks those funds to Hunter Education in an effort to enhance and support that important program.**

Montana's demographics are changing as people move here from around the country. SB 395 affords an opportunity to introduce not only youth but also adults to our hunting heritage in a safe and proven, but limited, manner. This introduction will serve as a gateway to Hunter Education participation and full licensure in the future and help change the disturbing trajectory of hunter recruitment in Montana. The "try before you buy" concept has worked in other states and will undoubtedly be successful in Montana.

Opposition to the Apprentice program is generally based on speculation and emotion. The difference now is that we have years of experience in many other states that demonstrate irrefutably the value of the Apprentice program in recruitment, retention and safety.

Please Pass SB 395. Six years ago there were 27 states participating in Families Afield and now there are 35. I ask that by the close of the 64th Legislative Session Montana will become the 36th.