

HB 644 (2025) – Hearing Date 2.5.2025 2PM

Resources Committee - Written Testimony of **Marie Sapienza, Esq.**

Qualifications – Former 4 term State Rep. representing at various times all or some of the towns of Plaistow, Atkinson, Kingston and Hampstead; Licensed Part 107 Drone Pilot since 2018; Professional Photographer with drone image cover on Down East Magazine Jan 2021 and drone image contributor for NH Wildlife Journal.

Desire 1: Ability partake of enjoying state park areas by being able to take off and land from locations with State Parks and (already permitted to fly in the airspace per FAA regulations)

Desire 2: to the extent permits are necessary, that they be made as easy to obtain as a hunting license

Background: The FAA extensively regulates both small unmanned aircraft systems (drones) and airspace by requiring education and for commercial pilots, also licenses. All drones must be registered with the FAA and be tagged visibly with that registration number. General drone operations are not permitted over people or at night. State/local laws already protect people from harassment/stalking/invasion of privacy.

Precedent: (See attached Forest Service document) Drone take offs and landings *are permitted* in the White Mountain National Forest in designated areas (most of the park).

Discussion: Drones are something new and legislation at the state level is scant. Currently NH has only one drone “law” on the books prohibiting using drones for hunting. There are some Departments, likes Parks and DOT that have instituted drone “policies.” There is currently a policy that drones are not permitted to be launched or landed in State parks. FAA controls airspace, so all the state can control is the ground under the airspace (see attached fact sheet from FAA regarding state regulation of drones). So currently drones can be flown over state park land legally, provided all FAA requirements for visual observers are followed.

It is exponentially easier to shoot a gun in a state park than it is to fly a drone in one. No desire to mess with hunting as I am a staunch supporter of gun/hunting rights. But an objective comparison is reasonable in this instance. Please see my attached chart comparing the two activities as it relates to state parks. Hunting is a louder and more dangerous activity than flying a drone and yet it is permitted in state parks through an immediate online licensing.

Hunting serves a recreational and maintenance function. Drone flying can be both as well, providing beautiful landscape images as well as reference points in time for forest health.