[DATE]

Dear Division Fisheries and Wildlife Staff and Board:

As a resident of [LOCALITY] and your constituent, I respectfully ask that you propose and pass regulations to end coyote killing contests in the state of Massachusetts. Allowing such events is quite simply an embarrassment for the Commonwealth.

In coyote killing contests, contestants compete for cash and prizes to see who can kill the most animals, or the largest or smallest animal. These contests are unsporting and cruel, violating the hunting principles of “fair chase”—the notion that the hunter should not have an unfair advantage over the animal—and respect for animals and their habitats. Once the prizes are awarded, the bodies of the animals are often treated like trash. These killing contests flout sportsmanship ethics and outdoor traditions, and instead glorify killing and violence, and send a dangerous message to younger generations of hunters.

Further, coyote killing contests do not control the coyote population, address problem coyotes, or increase game animal population numbers. Coyote killing contests also create instability and chaos in the family structures of animals who are killed and more conflicts between coyotes and people and/or their pets may occur as a result.

These contests are also inconsistent with the values of the public majority. Recent studies in Ohio and Massachusetts have shown that American attitudes towards animals, especially historically stigmatized animals such as coyotes, have changed in a positive overall trend in the last several decades. Overall, coyotes are in fact generally well-liked. This goes to show that the American public—in whose trust all wildlife is held—recognizes the value in these wild creatures.

Prohibitions on wildlife killing contests are indeed happening across the country:

* The Arizona Game and Fish Commission, just days ago on June 21, 2019, voted unanimously to ban predator killing contests.
* New Mexico's legislature abolished coyote killing contests 2019.
* The Maryland Senate passed a moratorium in February, 2019 on cownose ray killing contests.
* Vermont's legislature abolished coyote killing contests in 2018.
* The California Fish and Game Commission banned the awarding of prizes for killing furbearing and nongame animals in 2014.
* Oregon's legislature is currently debating a measure to ban coyote killing contests.

We should also consider the perspective of hunters and other recreationists who respect the role that all native species play in their ecosystems. In numerous studies, both the general public and hunters themselves object to hunting activities that are viewed as unfair, unsporting, inhumane or unsustainable, such as competitions for killing the most animals.

Unethical, unscientific, and ineffective wildlife hunting contests do not reflect fair sportsmanship. In the interest of respecting the values of Massachusetts citizens and in demonstrating to the nation that we engage in ethical and responsible wildlife management in this state, I ask that the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife propose regulations to ban these events, and that the Board vote to pass these regulations.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,