

I would like to thank Rep Alexander and this committee for letting me speak today. My name is Tom Knutson and I represent Knutson's Recreational Sales in Brooklyn, MI. I am a second generation, family member of a wholesale bait business that was started in 1959. In 2012 I sat in front of this committee with then Rep. Mike Shirkey, on a bill to allow the exportation of imported minnows. At the time there was no way to export minnows from the state of Michigan either imported or wild caught. We asked for the change because at the time there was a lot of pressure from USFW and other agencies on the movement of bait fish across the United States and we wanted to make sure we complied being that our business is close to the boarder with both Ohio and Indiana. At that time in 2012 we were trying to find a way to keep minnows a viable part of the sportfishing industry. The industry has just gone through some very trying times starting in 2006/2007 with the VHS virus. When the DNR implemented it's VHS safeguards the minnow industry lost 50% of the licensed minnow dealers in the state of Michigan because of very stringent guide lines that were confusing to both the dealers and to the consumers. Some of those guide lines have been relaxed but too late to bring back the lost business. During that house committee meeting there were a few Reps on the committee that wanted to open exportation of all minnows, Imported or Michigan wild caught. It was obvious the DNR was not receptive to that change and the bill was passed to only allow imported minnows to be exported, it passed the House and then the Senate, and it was signed by the Governor.

In early January of 2020 while having a conversation with my son and his now fiancé over dinner she mentioned a US Supreme court case they had studied in a Law class she was taking at the time, that was based on Minnows. The case, Hughes v Oklahoma. (see attachment) In the case Mr. Hughes had transported wild caught minnows from OK to his commercial business in TX. At the time Oklahoma, like Michigan's current law did not allow minnows caught in state waters to be exported. Mr. Hughes fought it to the Supreme court and Oklahoma lost the case based on the Commerce Clause of the Constitution.

The bill before you will remove the section of current State law that bans the exportation of Michigan caught Minnows to make it compliant with that Supreme court ruling. We thank you for taking the time to consider this Bill. The

Minnow industry has been hit hard since the VHS Virus came into existence. The existing law hand ties the catchers to a very limited area in which to sell their product. Over the last few Winter's, the catchers have had to dispose of their Fall caught minnows because of the recent stretch of poor Winter's, this includes the most recent one as the Great Lakes did not freeze enough or last long enough for them to sell all of the minnows caught in the Fall of 2020. If they could have been able to export those minnows to other states where ice was plentiful, they would have been able recoup some of their expenses and maybe even made a little profit. And most all of they would not have had to waste the resource.

Thank you for taking the time to hear our concerns and we hope that you will vote this out of committee so the catcher's can start to move forward. We have 2 other industry people with us today. The first is Ben Gollon from Gollon Bros. Wholesale Live Bait, from Stevens Point Wisconsin to speak on behalf of those interested in the purchase and distribution of the minnows. Also with us is James Mackie from Mackie's Live Bait who is one of the top catchers in the State. Both men would like to speak and then if there are any questions you may have, we would be more than happy to answer them.

Thank You

Tom Knutson

Knutson's Rec. Sales Inc