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To: Assembly Environment Committee
From: Toni Herkert, Government Affairs Director, League of Wisconsin Municipalities
Date: June 8, 2023
RE: AB 171 – Related to Eligibility for Local Wildlife Control Grants

Chairman Oldenburg, Vice-Chair Kitchens, and Committee Members,

My name is Toni Herkert and I am the Government Affairs Director with the League of Wisconsin Municipalities. The League represents almost all of the 606 cities and villages and their councils and boards from large and small communities throughout the state. From the largest cities to the Villages of Yuba and Stockholm, with populations of 74 and 76, and everywhere in between, the League represents a diverse array of municipal members.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on Assembly Bill 171 relating to the eligibility for local wildlife control grants. We would like to thank Representative Tusler and Senator Cowles for their leadership on this initiative. The idea for this legislative change was brought to us by the Village of Kimberly in Representative Tusler's district. You will hear testimony written by the Village President today as well.

Current wildlife damage abatement and control grants help to develop wildlife plans and implement specific damage abatement and/or control measures for white-tailed deer and/or Canadian geese. They are available to any town, city, village, county, or tribal government within an urban area. The department may award matching grants for up to 50 percent of the department approved costs of the projects. No grant may exceed \$5,000 in any fiscal year.

When the program was created in the 1997-99 State Budget eligible recipients were identified as "urban communities," but a definition was not provided. The DNR rules implementing the statutory program created a definition of urban area and cross-referenced s. 86.196 related to tourist-oriented directional signs because it contained a definition of urban area. However, that definition was linked to boundaries established in a Federal Highway Administration publication entitled Urban Federal Aid Systems and was published in January of 1989.

Based on that federal transportation definition from 1989 only 128 communities are eligible for grants from the program. And we know several communities struggle with wildlife damage and control of whitetail deer and Canadian geese.

The DNR currently utilizes a ranking system that helps to distribute available funding each year. The criteria used to rank applications for grant awards include:

- the extent that the application addresses prevention and abatement of nuisance wildlife problems or wildlife damage to human safety, health, property.
- the extent that the application includes long-term solutions to wildlife problems such as habitat modification or adopting a "no wildlife feeding" ordinance.
- the cost-effectiveness of the plan or project.
- the severity of the wildlife damage or nuisance problem addressed by the application.
- the likelihood of preventing the specified damage or nuisance.

The League is comfortable with the modification of the eligibility criteria because we are confident that the ranking criteria will prioritize those communities that are experiencing greater damage to human safety, health, and property which would target more densely populated locations.

Thank you for your consideration of this legislation. We hope the committee can support Assembly Bill 171. I would be happy to answer questions now or you can contact me at your convenience at therkert@lwm-info.org.