



**BACKCOUNTRY
HUNTERS & ANGLERS**
PENNSYLVANIA

Subject: Support of House Bill 1108

To: Chairmen Gillespie, Neilson, and members of the House Game & Fisheries Committee.

The Pennsylvania Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers (BHA) supports the efforts by Chairman Neilson and requests a positive vote on **House Bill 1108**.

BHA's mission is to ensure North America's outdoor heritage of hunting and fishing in a natural setting, through education and work on behalf of wild public lands and waters. The Pennsylvania chapter is one of the fastest growing groups of sportsmen and women who advocate for access to public lands as well as the ability to hunt and fish.

House Bill 1108 would lower barriers to veterans and others involved in therapeutic angling programs or events that assist in physical or mental recovery.

At BHA we know that an outdoors lifestyle provides mental and physical benefits and a better quality of life for all who embrace it. For veterans and others who have been through physical and emotional trauma, hunting and angling can be more than a salve, it can be a lifeline; a critical chance to focus on something positive and connect with others with whom they may share similar circumstances and experiences.

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers has firsthand knowledge of group veteran's events through its Armed Forces Initiative (AFI). The program's Dual Skills Acquisition Camps provide an opportunity and community for small groups of veterans to gain and share hunting and angling skills and foundational knowledge of public lands and waters advocacy via trips on wild public lands.

Through that work in our AFI program, we understand the challenges to putting on group therapeutic programs and we are willing to tackle those, but licensing simply should not be one of them. Lowering the barriers to therapeutic events by providing an exemption for participants is the right thing to do and we fully support House Bill 1108.

BHA Pennsylvania Chapter's board of directors urge a positive vote for this bill as you bring it before the committee and ultimately the House Floor. Thank you for the consideration. If you have any questions please contact BHA's representative, John Kline at john@klineassociatesltd.com.

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