



Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor
Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Secretary
Charles Glass, Deputy Secretary

February 11, 2020

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky
Chair, Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Cheryl C. Kagan
Vice Chair, Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Letter of Information – Senate Bill 353 – Black Bear Damage Reimbursement Fund – Pets

Dear Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources provides the following information regarding Senate Bill 353. This bill would add damage to pets by a black bear as an eligible claim from the Black Bear Damage Reimbursement Fund (Fund).

The Fund was created by the Maryland General Assembly in 1996 and was originally established to support bear damage claims by livestock owners and grain producers. Today, the Fund relies on sale of black bear marketing items and donations from hunters. Revenues to the Fund have averaged around \$3,500 annually over the last ten years while claim requests from farmers ranged from \$4,600 to over \$50,000. The average payout to an individual farmer has been \$152 over the past three years.

In adding damage to pets, the bill retains the requirement to compensate farmers who sustain eligible bear damage to their crops or livestock. Due to limited nature of the Fund, payments would be allocated on a proportional basis to all claimants eligible to receive compensation.

Thank you for allowing the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to provide this information regarding Senate Bill 353.

Respectfully submitted,
James W. McKitrick
Director, Legislative and Constituent Services