



February 11, 2020

House Department of Environment and Transportation
Room 251
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: HB 173

Dear Chairman, Vice Chairman and Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland Association for Wildlife Conservation (“MAWC”). MAWC is an umbrella organization, founded in Maryland in 1976, for sporting groups who use beagles, bassets, foxhounds, and other scent hounds in sporting endeavors, both mounted and unmounted. MAWC represents over a dozen clubs with more than 1,000 members throughout our great state.

My organization was first encouraged to support House Bill 173, as it was described to us by a member of the Governor’s Wildlife Advisory Commission, as merely an effort to “clean up” several years of attempts to define Sunday hunting laws throughout the state. I was told that this bill would create an omnibus of sorts; merely organizing, yet making no changes to existing law. Upon closer consideration of the fine print of the bill, however, it became clear that significant changes to current laws are indeed being made; some which would potentially open opportunities for hunting and chasing with hounds, but others which would shut such opportunities down. Our organization is particularly concerned with HB 173’s opening of Sunday hunting on public land in areas where limited opportunities for Sunday hunting on private land already exist. MAWC has been part of the conversations, and hard-won compromises, for several years to allow for some Sunday hunting in said areas, only because it was being done on private land. Had public land been part of the equation, we, and other such sporting groups, never would have given our support, and the bills likely never would have passed.

We applaud the DNR in its attempt to simplify Sunday hunting laws within the state, but would only support HB 173 if amendments were made to the proposed language which mirror the existing laws. As the bill is currently written, we strongly oppose.

Sincerely yours,

Jennifer Sponseller Webater
Association Manager
Maryland Association for Wildlife Conservation (MAWC)