

HB378_MDSierraClub_fav 15Feb23.pdf

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Position: FAV



P.O. Box 278
Riverdale, MD 20738

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on: HB378 “Natural Resources - Black Bear Conflict Reduction and Damage Reimbursement Fund - Uses”

Position: Support

Hearing Date: February 15, 2023

The Maryland Sierra Club supports HB378, which expands the scope and application of the current “Black Bear Damage Reimbursement Fund” (Maryland Natural Resource Code 10-423.1) and renaming the fund, the “Black Bear Conflict Reduction and Damage Reimbursement Fund.” Alterations proposed by HB378 will increase the current Fund’s efficiency by:

- 1) Including funding for programs that encourage the use of preventative measures to reduce conflicts between citizens and Black Bears, reducing damages to business and property.
- 2) Increasing both the minimum and maximum amount of damages that can be reimbursed by the “Black Bear Damage Reimbursement Fund” per person on an annual basis.
- 3) Changing the qualifiers in grant application to extend eligibility to landowners, local governments, park and recreation departments, non-profit organizations, business, tribes, and higher education institutions.
- 4) Securing the continuation of the “Black Bear Conflict Reduction and Damage Reimbursement Fund” as a non-lapsing special fund to be controlled by the State Treasurer and State Comptroller.

The American Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*) is a keystone species in the ecological cycle of Maryland’s food web. Through a diet rich in edible plant life, Black Bears are responsible for the dispersal of seeds over large territories. The fish they consume and later deposit as scat, spreads marine-derived nitrogen onto the forested areas that surround lakes and rivers. The habitual grubbing Bears perform assist in the decomposition of dead logs and stumps while creating openings in the forest cover for sunlight to stimulate regeneration of young trees. Bears are consumers of carrion, further aiding the natural world’s cycle of decomposition and regrowth.

The American Black Bear characteristically avoids human contact and can be deterred from entering areas where people dwell using noises like soft radio music and ringing wind chimes. The sensitive nose of Bears is quick to avoid smells such as diluted ammonia and bleach. Securing food crops and also using tightly lidded trash containers can help in reducing odors that attract Black Bears. These are just a few of the non-lethal practices for which HB378 would provide funding to encourage, teach, and develop additional innovations.

It is in our conservational interest to invest in the prevention of conflict with Maryland’s population of Black Bears. The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club asks for a favorable report.

Rev. Melina Frame
Sierra Club Natural Places Committee
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Josh Tulkin
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Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.

HB378_FAV_HSUS.pdf

Uploaded by: Jennifer Bevan-Dangel

Position: FAV



February 15, 2023

Environment and Transportation Committee

HB 378

Natural Resources - Black Bear Conflict Reduction and Damage Reimbursement Fund – Uses
FAVORABLE

The Humane Society of the United States, on behalf of our Maryland members and supporters, supports HB378, which provides communities and farmers alike with funds to *prevent* human-bear conflicts *before* they occur.

This legislation will help provide funding for innovative programs that promoted coexistence in other states. For example, in Durango, Colorado, Dr. Johnson and others set up a bear trash-proofing experiment. They gave two study groups of residents bear-resistant trash containers, enhanced those residents' bear-aware education, served residents with warnings and worked with the city to increase law enforcement. Meanwhile, two control groups of residents did not receive free bear-proof trash cans, enhanced education, warnings or law enforcement. The outcome was significant: the study groups saw bear conflicts decline by 60 percent. During this study, bears learned to leave the areas where residents complied with trash laws and shifted to areas of the city where human foods were readily abundant. Dr. Johnson emphasizes that law enforcement was a key factor in reducing bear conflicts in Durango.¹ At the Oct. 2022, 6th International Human-Bear Conflict Workshop, that group of researchers reported that 98% of trash cans in Durango, Colorado are now bear resistant, with two-thirds having automatic locking lids. This increased compliance dramatically—researchers reported 92% compliance with automatically locking lids.² Education and law enforcement are key to reducing urban bear conflicts. Rural communities similarly need help with installing electric fencing or other deterrents around beehives, chicken coops, livestock pastures or even some crops.

It is clear from multiple human-bear conflict studies that bear hunting is not an appropriate method of addressing that concern.³ A brand new journal article shows that when researchers in Canada tested whether a new bear-hunting season in Ontario reduced human-bear conflicts, it did not even as hunters killed a “significant” number of bears. Researchers write, “there was no concomitant reduction in interactions or incidents and, in fact, these [interactions] were higher in areas with the new spring season relative to control areas.”⁴

Black bears are sparsely populated across vast areas. In their lifetimes, bears produce few offspring, but devoted mothers care for their cubs for extended periods—up to two years. Females are not adults until they are between 3-5 years old. And they produce litters only every 2-3 years. Only about 50% of their cubs ever make it to their first year of life.

If that weren't enough of a challenge for them, in North America bears have faced substantial habitat losses and that problem is worsening. Bears are limited by many factors including erratic weather conditions that harm their natural food sources, such as acorns, making them unavailable in some years.⁵ If bears don't put on enough weight before they enter their dens to hibernate, females will not reproduce and some bears, especially cubs, will not survive the winter.

Bears are extremely valuable to our ecosystems and economy, which is why we should protect them in Maryland. Researchers find that bears are as intelligent as great apes. And they're hugely beneficial to their habitats. For example, they spread more seed than birds, and when they're out of the den, their presence protects gray foxes from



mortality by other medium-sized carnivores. Bears are one of the most photographed and beloved of wildlife in North America. In some states or provinces, local communities literally earn millions of dollars from black bear ecotourism.

We understand that the bill has a large fiscal note and requires an annual appropriation into the Fund. We welcome a conversation with this Committee regarding the funding level you deem appropriate given the State's other budgetary considerations. We also appreciate that legislation has been introduced this session that would increase funding for Maryland's Wildlife and Heritage Service, and believe a portion of that funding could be used to offset this cost. And the benefits of this bill in both directly decreasing human financial loss does offset the cost to the State in funding it.

Life for bears grows harder every year. In order to co-exist with them, we need to use innovation to prevent conflicts before they occur. We thank the committee for its consideration of the bill and urge a favorable vote on HB378.

*For more information contact Jennifer Bevan-Dangel, Maryland State Director
jbevandangel@humanesociety.org | C 410-303-7954*

¹ Heather Johnson et al., "Assessing Ecological and Social Outcomes of a Bear-Proofing Experiment," *The Journal of Wildlife Management* (2018).

² Cassandre Venumiere-Lefebvre et al., "Follow-up Evaluation on the Effectiveness of a Large-Scale Effort to Use Bear-Resistant Garbage Cans, Including Automatic and Manual-Locking Cans, for Limiting Conflict in Durango, Co" (paper presented at the 6th International Human-Bear Workshop, Lake Tahoe, NV, 2022).

³ H. E. Johnson et al., "Shifting Perceptions of Risk and Reward: Dynamic Selection for Human Development by Black Bears in the Western United States," *Biological Conservation* 187 (2015); H. E. Johnson et al., "Human Development and Climate Affect Hibernation in a Large Carnivore with Implications for Human-Carnivore Conflicts," *Journal of Applied Ecology* 55, no. 2 (2018); S. Baruch-Mordo et al., "Stochasticity in Natural Forage Production Affects Use of Urban Areas by Black Bears: Implications to Management of Human-Bear Conflicts," *Plos One* 9, no. 1 (2014); D. L. Garshelis et al., "Is Diversionary Feeding an Effective Tool for Reducing Human-Bear Conflicts? Case Studies from North America and Europe," *Ursus* 28, no. 1 (2017); M. A. Barrett et al., "Testing Bear-Resistant Trash Cans in Residential Areas of Florida," *Southeastern Naturalist* 13, no. 1 (2014); Elizabeth F. Pienaar, David Telesco, and Sarah Barrett, "Understanding People's Willingness to Implement Measures to Manage Human-Bear Conflict in Florida," *Journal of Wildlife Management* 79, no. 5 (2015).

⁴ Joseph M. Northrup et al., "Experimental Test of the Efficacy of Hunting for Controlling Human-Wildlife Conflict," *The Journal of Wildlife Management* (2023).

⁵ Johnson et al., "Human Development and Climate Affect Hibernation in a Large Carnivore with Implications for Human-Carnivore Conflicts.;" D. L. Lewis et al., "Modeling Black Bear Population Dynamics in a Human-Dominated Stochastic Environment," *Ecological Modelling* 294 (2014).

HB378_FAV_KDangel.pdf

Uploaded by: Katherine Dangel

Position: FAV

February 15, 2023

Environment and Transportation Committee

House Bill: Black Bear Conflict Reduction and Damage Reimbursement Fund

FAVORABLE

Good afternoon chairman and members of the committee,

My name is Katherine Dangel and I am here to testify on house bill 378. House Bill 378 will help with conflict prevention between bears and people. Bears have been harming livestock and crops despite numerous attempts to stop this. Now we see a permanent solution. This could be funding farmers to help protect crops. It could be funding people to use bear-proof trash cans. It could also be preventing bears from entering suburban areas, or areas that have had previous conflicts with bears. This is our permanent solution.

I know from experience that killing an animal won't solve the problem. For a while a fox was attacking our chickens. Eventually that fox got hit by a car, but another fox just moved in right after him. The only permanent solution that my family could find was to put a fence around our Chicken coop. It is the same way with the bears. We need to focus on a permanent solution, not a temporary one.

We also should try to protect bears. Research has shown that bears are intelligent, and care and grieve for members of their family. Bears are also very good parents. They have been shown to be very protective of their young. One of the few reasons that Bears are aggressive to people is if they believe that they would hurt their cubs. Bears also help the environment. They spread plant and berry seeds through their excrement and they also help maintain local prey populations.

And this won't just help bears. This will also help animals like chickens, who are threatened by bears. Sometimes bears can go after livestock. Killing these bears will not solve the problem, because another bear will just move in. However with House Bill 378, funding could make a permanent solution. In 2015 we lost \$23,800 to bears trying to find food. This could have been saved by preventative measures.

In summary, this bill will save money and animal lives. This will create a permanent and a more peaceful solution. So please, vote yes on House Bill 378.

Natural Resources- Black Bear Conflict Reduction a

Uploaded by: Lisa Radov

Position: FAV



MARYLAND VOTES FOR ANIMALS

PO Box 10411
BALTIMORE, MD 21209

February 15, 2023

To: House Environment and Transportation Committee
From: Lisa Radov, President and Chairman, Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc.
Re: Natural Resources- Black Bear Conflict Reduction and Damage Reimbursement Fund- Uses
- HB 378 – Support

Chair Barve, Vice - Chair Stein, members of the Environment and Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Lisa Radov. I am the President and Chairman of Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc. We champion humane legislation to improve the lives of animals in Maryland. Speaking for Maryland Votes for Animals, our Board of Directors, and our members across the State of Maryland, I respectfully ask that the House Environment & Transportation Committee vote favorably for Natural Resources- Black Bear Conflict Reduction and Damage Reimbursement Fund – Uses - HB 378.

This bill would allow the Black Bear Damage Reimbursement Fund to authorize grants from the Fund to be made for projects that reduce conflicts between black bears and humans. It would rename the Black Bear Damage Reimbursement Fund to be the Black Bear Conflict Reduction and Damage Reimbursement Fund and require a certain amount of the Fund to be reserved for black bear damage reimbursement- and increase the minimum and maximum amounts of reimbursement from the Fund per person annually authorized for damage caused by black bears.

These changes to the existing program would expand the Black Bear Reimbursement Fund and allow it to be used as a proactive tool to fund conflict avoidance. It would open the fund to residents and towns as well as farmers.

The goal of this bill is to take a preventative approach to reduce conflicts with Black Bears. The grants would be for projects that reduce conflicts between humans and black bears through non-lethal methods such as bear-proof trashcans, appropriate fencing, and additional programs to reduce the number of Black Bears that frequent agricultural and community areas with community support. The grants could not be used to reduce the Black Bear population by lethal methods. By taking protective measures for property, people, and pets, Maryland makes a worthwhile investment as the Fund would enable recipients to stop conflicts with black bears before they occur, saving lives and property.

Thanks to Delegate Love for sponsoring this legislation. I urge the committee for a favorable report on HB 378.

HB_378_FAV_Hunters of Maryland

Uploaded by: Steve Keithley

Position: FAV



P.O. Box 501
Huntingtown, Maryland 20639

February 15, 2023

THE HONORABLE KUMAR BARVE AND MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE ENVIRONMENT AND
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

**RE: SUPPORT FOR HOUSE BILL 378 (Natural Resources – Black Bear Conflict Reduction
and Damage Reimbursement Fund -- Uses)**

The HUNTERS OF MARYLAND represent the interests of Maryland's hunting community at both the State and local level. Few realize that hunters underwrite almost 100% of all wildlife management and research costs through their purchase of hunting licenses, stamps and equipment. For the record, hunters do so willingly b/c of **American System of Conservation Funding**, a user-pay model celebrating its 85th Anniversary which also underscores the noble story of hunters as America's original conservationists.

https://wdfw.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-06/introduction_to_american_conservation_funding_.pdf

Steve Keithley, Founder (301/785-4774 [sssbkeith@comcast.net])
William R. Miles, Advocate (443/404-7449 [billmilesmd@comcast.net])

The HUNTERS OF MARYLAND support House Bill 378 b/c the State has a responsibility to mitigate potentially fatal conflicts between bears and humans. Taking of bears by hunters is a proven means of management control; but, hunting per se cannot prevent bear/human conflicts as Maryland's bear population continues to increase. We commend Senators West and McKay for proposing this commonsense approach as duly articulated by HSUS, et al.

We do have one idea for the Committee's consideration re the \$1 million mandated spending for proposed Black Bear Conflict Reduction and Damage Reimbursement Fund. Legislation is pending consideration by the 2023 General Assembly which would increase hunting license/stamp sales with some estimates circulating that the increase could annually generate \$8 million plus in special fund revenues, aka HB 378. It would be a fair and proper use of these dollars for the purposes intended by House Bill 378.

Respectfully submitted,

William R. Miles, Advocate

Support of HB 378 - Natural Resources - Black Bear

Uploaded by: Colby Ferguson

Position: FWA



Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

3358 Davidsonville Road • Davidsonville, MD 21035 • (410) 922-3426

February 15, 2023

To: House Environment & Transportation Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

Re: **Support of HB 378 - Natural Resources - Black Bear Conflict Reduction and Damage Reimbursement Fund - Uses**

On behalf of our Farm Bureau member families in Maryland, I submit this written testimony in support of HB 378, legislation that alters the Black Bear Damage Reimbursement Fund to authorize grants from the Fund to be made for projects that reduce conflicts between black bears and humans. It renames the Black Bear Damage Reimbursement Fund to be the Black Bear Conflict Reduction and Damage Reimbursement Fund. The bill increases the minimum and maximum amounts of reimbursement from the Fund per person annually authorized for damage caused by black bears from \$200 to \$500 and \$3,000 to \$5,000. It also requires a minimum of \$50,000 be available annually for the reimbursement of black bear damage. Lastly, it requires the Governor to include at least \$1,000,000 in the annual budget bill for the Fund.

Currently, there is very little funding in the program and the funding sources are through private donations and the sales of a bear portrait by DNR. This bill would put funding into a much-needed program for farmers and landowners that have damage from black bears.

MDFB Policy: We urge DNR to explore, develop and implement effective, innovative practices to control the black bear population in our state. We request DNR to reimburse farmers for crop damage caused by wildlife.

Maryland Farm Bureau requests two amendments to the bill. We ask that the reimbursement fund be increased to \$75,000 annually and the minimum amount of the reimbursement requirement be eliminated so smaller damages aren't excluded from being reimbursed.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS HB 378 & REQUESTS A FAVORABLE REPORT

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colby Ferguson". The signature is stylized and includes a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Colby Ferguson
Director of Government Relations

For more information contact Colby Ferguson at (240) 578-0396