



Maryland Grain Producers Association  
118 Dundee Ave, Chester, MD 21619  
Lindsay.mdag@gmail.com (p) 443-262-8491  
www.marylandgrain.com

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House Bill 175 - Income Tax Credit - Venison Donation - Alterations

Committee: Way & Means

MGPA Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland Grain Producers Association (MGPA) serves as the voice of grain farmers growing corn, wheat, barley and sorghum across the state. MGPA supports House Bill 175 which would repeal the \$300 cap on the income tax credit an individual can claim for venison donation in conjunction with a deer management permit.

According to estimates from the National Agricultural Statistics Service, Maryland farmers experience more than **\$10 million in crop damage annually**, with approximately **75 percent attributed to deer**. MGPA members believe this figure significantly understates actual losses, based on documented per-acre damage on working farms. In 2022, Maryland's deer population was estimated at **just over 200,000 white-tailed deer and approximately 10,000 sika deer**. Deer densities in many parts of the state exceed the capacity of suitable habitat, resulting in increased conflicts not only with agricultural producers, but also with motorists and homeowners.

Responsible hunting, combined with effective use of deer management and depredation permits, remains the most practical and proven tool for controlling deer overpopulation. However, deer management permits have historically been underutilized. Farmers consistently cite the lack of a viable outlet for harvested deer as the primary barrier to reducing crop damage. Most families can only use one or two deer per year and must rely on donation options for additional harvests.

In prior years, the State of Maryland allocated up to **\$125,000 annually to Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry (FHFH)**, enabling farmers and hunters to donate deer for processing and distribution to the Maryland Food Bank and other local food pantries. At its peak, FHFH processed and donated approximately **4,500 deer annually**, providing an estimated **720,000 meals of high-quality protein** to Marylanders in need. Since the discontinuation of state funding, FHFH has been able to process only about **1,100 deer per year**, due to limited resources.

House Bill 175 would help address this challenge by allowing farmers to harvest and donate more deer by lifting the cap on the total tax credit that may be claimed. The cost to process a single deer averages **approximately \$90**, and deer must be processed at a licensed facility to be accepted by food banks—making donation cost-prohibitive without support. By expanding the tax credit, this bill would benefit farmers seeking to manage crop damage while simultaneously increasing access to nutritious, locally sourced protein for Maryland families in need.

For these reasons, MGPA respectfully requests a **favorable report on House Bill 175**.