



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

Bill: HB 863 to prohibit wildlife killing contests
Position: Support
Date: February 26, 2020

Chair Barve and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Jill Fritz, I live in Maryland and I'm a Director of Wildlife Protection at the Humane Society of the United States. On behalf of our Maryland members, we offer our support for House Bill 863.

In wildlife killing contests, participants compete for cash and prizes for killing the most, the heaviest, or sometimes even the smallest animals. They're held in almost all of the 45 U.S. states that have not yet banned them, which are California in 2014, Vermont in 2018, and New Mexico, Arizona, and Massachusetts in 2019. Wildlife agencies in those states have made remarkably similar statements about public opposition to these contests:

The **Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department** said, "Coyote hunting contests are not only ineffective at controlling coyote populations, but these kinds of competitive coyote hunts are raising concerns on the part of the public and could possibly jeopardize the future of hunting and affect access to private lands for all hunters."¹

The **Arizona Game and Fish Commission** said, "To the extent these contests reflect on the overall hunting community, public outrage with these events has the potential to threaten hunting as a legitimate wildlife management function."²

And the **Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife** stated that, "...public controversy over this issue has the potential to threaten predator hunting and undermine public support for hunting in general..."³

These officials recognize that while only a small percentage of Americans are hunters—in Maryland, about 2% were paid hunting license holders in 2019—they generally remain supportive of fair-chase hunting.⁴ But they're growing less tolerant of practices, like wildlife killing contests, that they view as pointless, unsporting, or wasteful.⁵ These contests are an affront to the principles of modern, science-based wildlife management.

For these reasons, we ask for your support of HB 863. Thank you.

Jill Fritz
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¹ "Eastern Coyote Issues – A Closer Look," Vermont Fish & Wildlife, January 2017

<https://vtfishandwildlife.com/sites/fishandwildlife/files/documents/Hunt/trapping/Eastern-Coyote-Position-Statement.pdf>

² The Arizona Game and Fish Commission: Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Title 12. Natural Resources Chapter 4. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/azqfd-portal-wordpress/azqfd.wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/25093742/R12-4-303-NPRM.pdf>

³ The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, "Proposed Regulations to Ban Predator Contests and Prohibit Wanton Waste," July 25, 2019 <https://www.mass.gov/news/masswildlife-proposes-regulations-to-ban-predator-contests-and-prohibit-wanton-waste>

⁴ The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Historical Hunting License Data at <https://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/Subpages/LicenseInfo/Hunting.htm>

⁵ America's Wildlife Values: a collaborative project supported by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Multistate Conservation Grant Program. The research team led by Colorado State University includes partners representing top academic/research institutions, regional fish and wildlife management associations, and state fish and wildlife agency personnel. <https://sites.warnercnr.colostate.edu/wildlifevalues/>