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February 25, 2020

Chairperson Kumar Barve  
& Members of  
House Environment and Transportation Committee  
House of Delegates  
6 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401 (by hand)

Opposition to HB863

Dear Chairperson Barve and Committee Members:

I am an animal lover and sportsman, and I write to you in opposition to HB 863, as, if passed, the bill would outlaw constructive, traditional, and humane sporting activities - hound trials.

Specifically, I am a hound enthusiast. Foxhounds, coonhounds, and their human companions spend months training for trials, generally held outside of the traditional hunting seasons. During a hound trial, there is no wholesale killing of coyotes, foxes, or coons, and frequently there is absolutely no quarry harmed in the least. The goal of a hound trial is the thrill of the chase and the betterment of each breed by assessing the voice, stamina, speed, and scenting ability of the competing hounds during the chase. The best hounds get bragging rights, but also are matched up for breeding purposes.

While advocates in favor of the bill may parade photos of pickup loads of carcasses, what they don't show are the sights one would see at a hound trial: great memories, colorful ribbons, smiling children, bragging rights, and happy dogs. HB863 would outlaw this bloodless tradition, where the hunt, and not the kill, is the goal. These outings have been held in Maryland for generations without complaint, and HB863 would make this sport an endangered species.

Please stop HB863, and save the fun family sport of hound trialing. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
*Wendy Lee Gast*  
Wendy Lee Gast