

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

TESTIMONY SB 0356

Good Afternoon Honorable Committee Members:

My name is Margaret Crane. I have lived my entire adult life in Southern Maryland and for the last two decades have owned a large farm in southern Calvert County. I raise horse, sheep, cattle, and chickens on my farm. I also invest in habitat including warm season grasses, and sustainable crops that benefit a wide variety of wildlife.

In addition to my farm also have a nationally recognized pack of foot beagles, named the Hills Bridge Beagles. Outdoors Maryland did a special on the Hills Bridge Beagles, and the episode won an Emmy. Perhaps you wonder why Outdoors Maryland did a documentary on the Hills Bridge Beagles, the reason is the Hills Bridge Beagles offers regular people, without special gear, special skills or special knowledge an opportunity to get outside and enjoy the natural world, and enjoy the amazing resources Southern Maryland has to offer, as well as the opportunity to safely enjoy community and fellowship with others which is especially important these days with COVID. I have approximately 100 people who may join the Beagles in the field at some during a year. People that beagle range in age from the very young to the very old because on a beautiful day the only thing you need to go beagling is to desire to get outside.

I personally, and in my role with the Hills Bridge Beagles, am not opposed to hunting. In fact, I buy a hunting license and a furbearer permit every year to support the efforts of DNR.

That being the case, why do I and in my capacity with the Hills Bridge Beagles object to SB 356? Because HB 0356 picks ***winner and losers***. What do I mean by this? Under SB 356, deer would hunters win because they will be given ***exclusive use and control of the natural resources***. How would it do this you ask?

- ❖ **This bill would allow hunting in Calvert County on every Sunday of the year.**
- ❖ **This bill would allow Sunday hunting on public as well as private land. Since the advent of the pandemic, widespread use of outdoor recreation and natural resources by the general public has steadily increased.**
- ❖ **The bill sponsors would have you believe this legislation is needed for crop damage, but farmers already have the ability to get crop damage permits to surgically address damage caused by deer.**
- ❖ **The real purpose of the bills is to allow hunters to hunt whatever is in season every Sunday of the year. This bill does not change any specific season (e.g. this does not allow deer hunting year round.)**

- ❖ **A majority of Marylanders oppose Sunday hunting.** An independent statewide poll conducted by Gonzales Research and Media Services in 2018 found that 68.9% of respondents oppose Sunday hunting, and 78% would decide to alter their recreational plans to avoid hunters. In a Maryland Horse Council 2016 poll, 85% of respondents said they changed their schedules or riding locations to avoid encountering hunters. Even DNR's own commissioned survey found that a majority of the general population does not favor Sunday hunting and does not want to see it expanded.¹
- ❖ **According to DNR's survey, only 8% of the general population has hunted in the last two years, and 84% has never hunted.**¹
- ❖ **According to DNR's own information State Park attendance in 2020 increased by 45% to 21.5 million visitors.**
- ❖ **Lt. Governor Rutherford recently stated: "With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic changing the way we live, work, and play, more and more Marylanders are finding affordable, socially-distant, and family-friendly recreation opportunities at our parks and public lands...."**

Anyone who has spent any time outside, on either public land or private land knows that **deer hunters do not share**. Deer Hunters are fiercely protective of the resource and do not want anyone to use the resource, for any reason and at any time. I have repeatedly been told by deer hunters that **walking, running, biking, birding, riding and certainly beagling disturbs the deer and they will not tolerate it**. I could recount any number of times me, or my followers have been accosted by unhappy demanding deer hunters wielding a gun.

The passage of SB 356 will deny anyone, other than hunters, the right to use the resource.

In closing, I would respectfully ask you to consider, if the General Assembly represents all Marylanders, why would the General Assembly consider passing SB 356 which **gives 8% of the population a monopoly on using our natural resources?** That is what the effect of SB 356 will be – to give a monopoly on the use of the natural world in Calvert County to the gun hunters. This bill picks winners and losers and **outdoor enthusiasts will be the losers if this bill is passed.**

I urge the Committee to give SB 356 an unfavorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret Crane

¹ https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Documents/2018_DeerPublicOpinionSurvey.pdf