

March 22, 2021

RE: SB200 Environmental and Transportation Committee

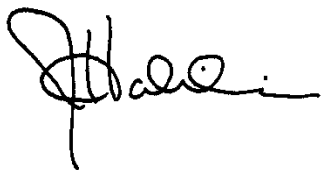
On behalf of Project Coyote, a national nonprofit organization with a special interest in the conservation and protection of native North American carnivores and on whose Science Advisory Board I sit, I would like to share some comments in support of SB 200, a bill to ban organized killing contests of wildlife (generally referred to as predator killing contests or “PKCs”). Currently seven states (AZ, CA, CO, MA, NM, VT, WA) have enacted bans against wildlife killing contests as part of a national movement to reject these anachronistic programs. They are joined by at least 16 local jurisdictions across the nation who have passed resolutions condemning the practice and calling on state legislators to ban killing contests. It is time for Maryland, long a leader in wildlife conservation, to do the same.

The plain and simple reason to prohibit PKCs is that killing wild animals without an adequate and reasonable science-based justification is unsportsmanlike and in complete contradiction to the values embraced by both the wildlife protection and conservation communities. Killing contests undermine the reputation of responsible hunters by violating fundamental hunting ethics. Wildlife agency professionals increasingly recognize that PKCs jeopardize the social legitimacy of sportsmen and sportswomen, leading organizations such as the Wildlife Society, a respected international voice for wildlife professionals, to issue statements of concern¹.

The arguments by advocates of PKCs that they are justified in that they support broad wildlife management objectives do not hold, as clearly shown by the complete lack of any science-based documentation of benefit. There is simply no credible evidence that indiscriminate killing of coyotes, foxes or raccoons serves any genuine role in managing or conserving other species. Beyond this there is a strong moral objection to contests in which participants strive to kill as many animals as possible in competition for prizes. These contests are a blood sport like dogfighting or cockfighting—which we as a nation have deemed unacceptably cruel and have banned—and they don’t belong in our state.

Thank you for considering this important wildlife conservation and protection issue.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Hadidian". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

John Hadidian, PhD
Science Advisor, Project Coyote
Vice President, District Coyote Project

ⁱ See <https://wildlife.org/position-statements/>