



House Bill 556

Queen Anne's County – Natural Resources – Sunday Hunting

Position: **SUPPORT**

Date: February 9, 2022

To: Environment and Transportation Committee

The Caroline County Commissioners **SUPPORT** HB 556, Queen Anne's County – Natural Resources – Sunday Hunting with the amendment submitted by Delegate Arentz to add Caroline County to this legislation. This legislation will permit the hunting of game birds (excluding migratory game birds) and game mammals on every Sunday of the mentioned seasons on private land only.

Caroline County and Queen Anne's County are rural, agricultural counties. As such, crop damage caused by deer is a serious economic problem. The U.S. Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service has found that deer cause the majority of wildlife crop damage, which results in millions of dollars of loss to farmers each year. Most of our farms are small, family-owned business and given the slim profit margins on agriculture, deer represent for a serious threat to financial security.

Furthermore, given the high whitetail deer population in rural areas, they also account for many automobile accidents each year. These accidents typically cause substantial vehicle damage and often injury to drivers and passengers. According to data from State Farm, there are more than 30,000 deer related collisions each year in Maryland. The average cost of repairs per collision is approximately \$4,000. This is a substantial sum of money in a poor countylike Caroline.

Expanded Sunday hunting would not just create cost avoidance, but also provide opportunities for small businesses focused on selling hunting gear or providing lodging for hunting trips to increase their revenue. Due to work schedules, it is often difficult for people to hunt except on weekends. By doubling the number of weekend hunting days, this legislation would greatly enhance the ability of these small businesses to generate revenue.

Finally, with such a large deer population, there is very little risk of over-hunting. Most farmers in Caroline and Queen Anne's County are truly hunting to protect their crops and to feed their families. Hunted venison is a high protein, low fat meat that has substantial nutritional value and is produced with little to no energy or environmental impact. In addition to venison, game birds and other small game mammals provide a similar source of nutritional value for individuals and families with a little to no environmental impact. By expanding hunting opportunities, the legislation would allow farmers and citizens to feed their families at a lower cost.

Additionally, farmers in Caroline County and Queen Anne's County donate a substantial amount of processed meat that they do not need to local food banks. Fresh, high-quality protein is expensive to purchase, so donated venison provides local food banks with a much-needed resource to help feed our most vulnerable residents.

This bill is a positive measure that will assist farms and other small businesses, while also providing greater access to a healthy and environmentally friendly food source. The Caroline County Commissioners respectfully request that the Committee issue a favorable report on HB 556 with the proposed amendment submitted by Delegate Arentz.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Larry Porter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Larry" being more prominent than the last name "Porter".

Larry Porter
President
Caroline County Commissioners