



MARYLAND VOTES FOR ANIMALS

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February 8, 2023

To: Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
From: Lisa Radov, President and Chairman, Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc.
Re: Natural Resources – Black Bear Conflict Reduction and Damage Reimbursement Fund – Uses – SB 310 - Support

Chairman Guzzone, Vice Chairman Rosapepe, members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee, my name is Lisa Radov. I am the President and Chairman of Maryland Votes for Animals. We champion humane legislation to improve the lives of animals in Maryland. Speaking for Maryland Votes for Animals, our Board of Directors, and our members across Maryland, I respectfully request that the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee vote favorably for Natural Resources – Black Bear Conflict Reduction and Damage Reimbursement Fund – Uses – SB 310.

This bill would allow the Black Bear Damage Reimbursement Fund to authorize grants from the Fund to be made for projects that reduce conflicts between black bears and humans. It would rename the Black Bear Damage Reimbursement Fund to be the Black Bear Conflict Reduction and Damage Reimbursement Fund and require a certain amount of the Fund to be reserved for black bear damage reimbursement - and increase the minimum and maximum amounts of reimbursement from the Fund per person annually authorized for damage caused by black bears.

These changes to the existing program would expand the Black Bear Reimbursement Fund and allow it to be used as a proactive tool to fund conflict avoidance. It would open the fund to residents and towns as well as farmers.

The goal of this bill is to take a preventative approach to reduce conflicts with Black Bears. The grants would be for projects that reduce conflicts between humans and black bears through non-lethal methods such as bear-proof trashcans, appropriate fencing, and additional programs to reduce the number of Black Bears that frequent agricultural and community areas with community support. The grants could not be used to reduce the Black Bear population by lethal methods. By taking protective measures for property, people, and pets, Maryland makes a worthwhile investment as the Fund would enable recipients to prevent conflicts with black bears before they occur, saving lives and property.

Thank you to Senator West for introducing this bill. I urge a favorable report for SB 310.