

Julia Peebles Testimony on SB327 (Maryland State Senate)
Committee on Education, Energy and the Environment
Wednesday, February 15th, 2023

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you, Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to testify today in support of SB327 to advance conservation funding and provide equitable access to hunting and outdoor recreation in Maryland. I also want to thank Senator Elfreth and all the sponsors for leading this effort, as well as partners like Delta Waterfowl for advocating for this important bill.

My name is Julia Peebles, and I am the Manager of Agriculture and Sustainability Policy for Ducks Unlimited. I am also a lifelong hunter, a new mother of a 10-month-old daughter, and a resident of Prince George's County. This bill resonates on both a professional and personal level for me, and through multiple conversations and negotiations, it is the farthest we have come in decades to making hunting and outdoor recreation accessible and more equitable for all Marylanders.

Being able to hunt waterfowl on Sundays and creating a program for the DNR to engage historically underserved communities, will ensure that future generations from all parts of Maryland will be able to enjoy what President Roosevelt aptly called our "rightful heritage," the great outdoors. These small changes to increase access and opportunity for youth, people of color and women, among others, will be a watershed moment in the state's history and will cement the reputation of Maryland's tremendous natural resources being the most accessible in the country.

Additionally, the increases in license and stamp fees will not burden the taxpayer, but benefit all Marylanders, not just hunters. The bulk of DNR's conservation funding is generated through these license fees. And because the vast majority of wildlife that DNR manages are non-game species, all people in Maryland will draw benefits, whether they hunt or not.

Right now, my daughter is too young to hunt, but I'm hoping to expose her to the outdoors this summer, even if that means she's playing (or eating) the dirt while I'm gardening or discovering earth worms in the ground and skinks crawling around. When my daughter is older, I want her to join me in the field and grow up with the same appreciation for the outdoors and a strong conservation ethic as I have. I can't help but think this moment will only be made easier for working parents like me when this legislation is passed. Our time off on the weekends will be maximized to ensure that our hunting heritage and love of nature persists through the generations. After today, with your approval, our state will be one step closer to ensuring that our woods and waters are not just the entitlement of the few, but the birthright of the many. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of this legislation and thank you for your leadership on conservation issues in Maryland.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julia Peebles', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Julia Peebles
Manager of Agriculture and Sustainability Policy
Ducks Unlimited