



# Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

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March 3, 2023

To: House Environment & Transportation Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

Re: **Support with Amendment of HB 983 - Hunting, Wildlife Conservation, and Outdoor Recreation - Funding, Promotion, Management, Licenses, Permits, and Stamps**

On behalf of our Farm Bureau member families in Maryland, I submit this written testimony in support with amendment of HB 983. This comprehensive wildlife management and hunting bill does many things. First, it cleans up the landowner liability language to ensure a landowner has proper liability coverage if they allow hunters to hunt on their land. Secondly, it establishes the Wildlife Conservation, Education, and Outreach Program to provide outreach and foster an interest in outdoor recreation and stewardship, hunting, and wildlife conservation. Next, it establishes a stamp for hunting sika deer and allows statewide Sunday hunting for waterfowl.

One of the biggest parts of the bill is it increased the fees for many of the hunting licenses and stamps. These fees haven't been increased in 36 years. The increased fees are to generate the needed funding for DNR to qualify for the available USDA matching funds that the department is currently receiving. These additional funding will allow DNR's Wildlife services division to provide the needed food habitats. MDFB has been asking for several years now to start and fund a farmer cost-share program to plant private land forage crops (AKA sacrificial crops) to help curb the crop loss on farms due to wildlife damage while also helping with the much-needed forage habitat.

**MDFB Policy:** We urge the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to explore, develop and implement effective, innovative practices to control the deer population in our state.

We urge the State of Maryland to provide cost share funding to help deter crop damage.

MDFB requests the following amendment:

Amendment #1: On page 12, Line 25, ADD a new **(3) A PORTION OF THE INCREASE SHALL BE USED FOR THE CREATION AND FUNDING OF A FARMER COST-SHARE PROGRAM TO PLANT PRIVATE LAND FORAGE CROPS (AKA SACRIFICIAL CROPS) TO HELP CURB THE CROP LOSS ON FARMS DUE TO WILDLIFE DAMAGE WHILE INCREASING FORAGE HABITAT.**

**MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS HB 983 WITH 1 AMENDMENT**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colby Ferguson".

Colby Ferguson

Director of Government Relations

*For more information contact Colby Ferguson at (240) 578-0396*