

Julia Peebles Testimony on HB0983 (Maryland State House)
Environment and Transportation Committee
Friday, March 3rd, 2023

Thank you, Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to testify today in support of HB0983 in its entirety to advance conservation funding, enhance equitable access to outdoor recreation, provide Sunday waterfowl hunting, and to protect farmers and landowners from being liable for injuries to people or property on their land. I also want to note that this legislation was not created in a vacuum, but came together with broad support, multiple conversations, and negotiations. And because of this I want to thank Delegate Allen and all the sponsors for leading this effort.

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. In a professional sense, I have worked with agriculture communities across the country, and they have always supported expanding hunting opportunities for all. On a personal level, I want the ability to hunt with my daughter on Sundays since I work five days a week.

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. There is no scientific data to suggest that expanding hunting access will impact waterfowl populations. In fact, Virginia, who legalized Sunday hunting for waterfowl a few years ago, and is part of the same flyway as Maryland, saw no appreciable difference in waterfowl harvests after implementing Sunday hunting.

These small changes, opening Sunday waterfowl hunting and creating a program for the DNR, will increase access and opportunity for youth, people of color and women, among others. It 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.

Right now, my daughter is too young to hunt, but I'm hoping to expose her to the outdoors soon and have her grow up with the same appreciation for nature, and a strong conservation ethic as I have. When my daughter is older, I want her to join me in the field. By supporting HB0983, you will enable working parents like me to use our time off on the weekends to hunt and ensure that our hunting heritage and love of nature persists through the generations. With your support and 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.