

SB0440_DNR_SUP_B&T_1-31-24.pdf

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Position: FAV



Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Josh Kurtz, Secretary
David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary

January 31, 2024

BILL NUMBER: Senate Bill 440 – First Reader

SHORT TITLE: Income Tax Credit - Venison Donation

DEPARTMENT’S POSITION: SUPPORT

EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT’S POSITION

The Department supports SB 440. This bill provides a mechanism for hunters to recoup some of the money they spend for processing/butchering deer when they donate the venison to charitable organizations. By alleviating some of the processing costs, hunters may be willing to harvest additional antlerless deer, which assists with managing the state’s deer population.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Maryland offered a tax credit incentive for processing deer from 2018 - 2022. The law afforded an individual who harvested an antlerless deer to claim a credit against the State income tax for up to \$50 per deer of the qualified processing expenses for a maximum of \$200 annually. There was no cap if the antlerless deer were harvested under authority of a Deer Management Permit. Each harvest was required to comply with State hunting laws and regulations and the individual had to donate the processed deer meat to a venison donation program administered by an organization that was exempt from taxation under § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Comptroller data provided for 2022 suggests that tax credits were claimed for approximately 5,000 processed and donated deer for a total credit amount of \$128,000. Maryland’s current white-tailed deer population is estimated at 225,000 and hunters harvest 75,000 – 85,000 deer annually. The fees to process a deer currently average approximately \$75 - \$125 per deer.

BILL EXPLANATION

Senate Bill 440 modifies the previous tax credit structure explained above. Hunters would be able to claim a tax credit of up to \$75 per deer of the qualified processing expenses for a maximum of \$600 annually. Like previously, there would be no cap if the deer are harvested under the authority of a Deer Management Permit.

Contact: Dylan Behler, Director, Legislative and Constituent Services
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Elfreh - SB 440 Testimony.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Sarah Elfreh

Position: FAV

SENATOR SARAH ELFRETH
Legislative District 30
Anne Arundel County



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Budget and Taxation Committee

Subcommittees

Capital Budget

Pensions

Chair, Public Safety,
Transportation, and Environment

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area

Chair, Joint Subcommittee on
Program Open Space/Agricultural
Land Preservation

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

January 31, 2024

Testimony in Favor of SB 440
Income Tax Credit - Venison Donation

Chairman Guzzone, Vice-Chair Rosapepe, and members of the Budget and Taxation Committee,

I respectfully request a favorable report of Senate Bill 440 to reinstate the deer donation tax credit program and update the amount to more accurately reflect the cost of processing. I extend my gratitude to this Committee for your work on launching this program in 2018 and updating it in 2021.

Deer donation programs serve a dual purpose of providing critical protein to food banks across Maryland while helping to control the deer population. Deer donation was incentivized in tax years 2018-2022 by a tax credit to supplement hunters for the cost they pay for processing the deer prior to donation to food banks. This program was incredibly popular; the Comptroller's office reports that at the inception of the program in TY18, 2800 total deer were donated. This increased over time, with the Comptroller reporting over 5000 deer donated in TY22. Despite the success of this program, the tax credit reached its sunset in January 2023 and has not been available to hunters since. SB 440 reinstates this tax credit program through 2030.

SB 440 helps to control the deer population in Maryland. Importantly, the bill incentivizes the hunting of female deer who otherwise aren't sought after for trophy hunting purposes. Further, it serves to curb the damage done by deer in motor vehicle accidents, which the Department of Natural Resources reported in 2021 as the cause of 30,000-35,000 collisions per year.¹ This bill will also support Maryland's farmers in an effort to protect crops from damage by deer, which the Maryland Farm Bureau estimates as resulting in \$60 million in crop loss annually in Maryland.²

Since the program launched in TY18, the cost of deer processing has increased, causing the prior amount of \$50 per donated deer to become a less enticing incentive to donate deer as it did not cover the cost of processing. SB 440 updates this incentive amount to more accurately reflect the cost of processing, setting the credit at \$75 per deer with a cap of \$300 per year.

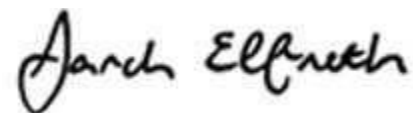
¹ <https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Documents/Maryland-Annual-Deer-Report-2020-2021.pdf>

² [https://mda.maryland.gov/Documents/Crop%20Damage%20from%20Deer%20in%20Maryland%20\(MFB\).pdf](https://mda.maryland.gov/Documents/Crop%20Damage%20from%20Deer%20in%20Maryland%20(MFB).pdf)

Effectively incentivizing hunters to donate deer to food banks will make more protein available for Marylanders in need but also support the control of the deer population. Senate Bill 440 ensures that these dual benefits are once again experienced across Maryland.

I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 440.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Elfret". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Senator Sarah Elfret
District 30

Support SB440 - Tax Credit - Venison Donation.pdf

Uploaded by: Tyler Hough

Position: FAV



Maryland Farm Bureau

3358 Davidsonville Road | Davidsonville, MD 21035
410-922-3426 | www.mdfarmbureau.com

To: Budget and Taxation Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

RE: **Support of SB0440 Income Tax Credit - Venison Donation**

On behalf of our nearly 9,500 Farm Bureau families in Maryland, I submit this written testimony supporting SB0440. This bill would allow certain individuals to claim a credit against the state income tax if an antlerless deer is harvested and donated to certain charitable organizations.

According to USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, Maryland farmers face up to 10 million dollars in estimated economic loss from wildlife damage. Of this economic loss, 77% of the damage is caused by deer. Farm families in Maryland are more often than not hunters who look to manage and maintain their land respectfully. Our farmers support the idea of tax credit opportunities that incentivize hunting deer along with donating to a respective group that is sure to benefit from such donation. This bill can alleviate some of the taxes incurred on family farms and encourage donations of deer meat to charitable venison. Expanding these tax credit opportunities is important to farmers and is a step towards securing agricultural viability in Maryland.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy: We support the “Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry” program and support an increase in state funding or a tax credit for the program.

The following actions will decrease crop damage from deer, and we support immediate enactment: A state tax credit for each deer donated to a food bank or other food donation non-profit under a crop damage permit.

Maryland Farm Bureau supports SB0440.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tyler Hough', written over a horizontal line.

Tyler Hough
Director of Government Relations

Please contact Tyler Hough at 443-878-4045 with any questions

HOM Testimony in Support for Senate Bill 440 (Inco

Uploaded by: william miles

Position: FAV



P.O. Box 501
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billmilesmd@comcast.net

January 31, 2024

THE HONORABLE GUY GUZZONE
Chair, Senate Budget & Transportation Committee

HONORABLE MEMBERS

RE: SUPPORT FOR SENATE BILL 440 (Income Tax Credit – Venison Donation)

The HUNTERS OF MARYLAND, LLC represent the interests of Maryland's hunting community at both the State and local level. Few realize that hunters underwrite 100% of all wildlife management/research costs through their purchase of hunting license fees/ equipment. For the record, hunters do so willingly b/c of **American System of Conservation Funding**, a user-pay model celebrating its 85th Anniversary which also underscores the noble story of hunters as America's original conservationists.

Steve Keithley, Founder (301/785-4774 [sssbkeith@comcast.net])
Bill Miles, Advocate (443/404-7449 [billmilesmd@comcast.net])

The HUNTERS OF MARYLAND, LLC support Senate Bill 440 which would increase the now-expired income tax credit from \$50 to \$75 to offset processing costs for harvested deer when donated to a non-profit organization, aka food banks. *No doubt the Comptroller's Office will have the statistics attendant to hunter participation prior to the tax credit's termination in 2023.* If enacted, this tax credit represents one more way to help encourage the harvesting of deer while providing healthy sustenance to the needy.

Noteworthy, extension of this now-expired income tax credit was not referenced in the December 1, 2023, Report required by Chapters 543/544, Acts of 2023 which reads as follows:

- (a) On or before December 1, 2023, the Department of Natural Resources, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture, shall develop a plan to address the overpopulation of deer in the State.
- (b) The plan shall include: (1) the feasibility of implementing a rotational closure hunting strategy on State land, including State park system lands and hunting on State land on Sundays; (2) any legislative, budgetary, or regulatory changes needed to implement a rotational closure hunting strategy on State-owned land; (3) subject to subsection (c) of this section, the feasibility of implementing a rotational closure hunting strategy on locally owned land; (4) proposals the Department of Natural Resources determines are viable for addressing the overpopulation of deer in the State; and (5) suitable uses for any increased federal funding to the State Wildlife Management and Protection Fund.

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(c) The Department of Natural Resources shall consult with local governments regarding the feasibility of a rotational closure hunting strategy under subsection (b)(3) of this section.

The Report, issued on time, recommends the following (link provided):

1. Identify a funding source and PINs to hire department staff dedicated to supporting a Deer Management Assistance Program directed towards mitigating deer damage suffered by landowners. This program should have the authority to issue deer management harvest tags outside of the current agricultural/forest damage requirements.
2. Address legislation that prohibits or restricts Sunday deer hunting in order to provide more deer hunting opportunities. This should be addressed at the private and public land level, including state parks.
3. Work with local and county governments to develop county-specific deer management plans.
4. Expand cooperation between agencies, including MDA and UMD Extension.
5. Identify funding to support additional research and management concerning deer damage mitigation.

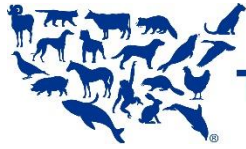
[https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/DNR/SB327Ch543HB983Ch544\(2\)\(2023\).pdf](https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/DNR/SB327Ch543HB983Ch544(2)(2023).pdf)

IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, Senate Bill 440 would provide another tool in the hunting arsenal intended to help management Maryland's deer population. It is for this reason, and more, the HUNTERS OF MARYLAND, LLC request a favorable report on Senate Bill 440.

SB440_HSUS_LOI.pdf

Uploaded by: Jennifer Bevan-Dangel

Position: INFO



THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

January 31, 2023

Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

SB 440

Income Tax Credit – Venison Donation

LETTER OF INFORMATION

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), on behalf of our Maryland supporters, wanted to provide the committee with brief background and information on SB 440, *Income Tax Credit – Venison Donation*. We do not take a position on this bill but want to ensure the committee understands the context of the larger conversation around deer management in Maryland.

The HSUS, along with wildlife management professionals and sportsmen's groups, stands in firm opposition to any legislation that contravenes longstanding conservation principles to create direct payments to hunters for taking what is, has been, and must always be a public resource that is managed in the public trust. We appreciate that the sponsor of SB 440 has clarified the tax credit to more clearly link the payments to the processing and butchering costs, not the deer itself. That clarification is critically important.

The HSUS has seen – and has strenuously opposed – past attempts to commodify the harvesting of deer, or the offering of cash rewards for the killing of any wildlife. Such monetary incentives are not proven to reduce conflicts, do not target specific, problem-causing animals, and are a waste of taxpayer money and state resources. Further, the commercialization of Maryland's wildlife runs counter to longstanding principles of responsible, fair chase hunting, as well as the historic rejection of market hunting by wildlife management agencies and professionals.

The HSUS understands the challenges facing farmers in reducing deer damage to crops. We urge the farming community to work with the Department of Natural Resources to expand the implementation of exclusion and repellent techniques for reducing cervid damage, and build on existing programs for targeted, strategic deer management, especially seasonal damage to high-value crops.

This bill is targeted and limited, and we thank the sponsor for the careful drafting of SB 440. While we do not take a position on this bill we urge the committee to review any deer hunting legislation with a critical eye for avoiding commodification of this public resource.