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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.