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## SUPPORT

*Senate Bill 847 (Dorchester County – Sunday Hunting – Repeal of Time Restrictions)*

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 almost 100% of all wildlife management and research costs through their purchase of hunting licenses, stamps, and equipment. For the record: (1) hunters do so willingly b/c of **American System of Conservation Funding**, a user-pay model celebrating its 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary which also underscores the noble story of hunters as America's original conservationists; and (2) hunting in Maryland is a powerful economic engine as noted in the link below.

<https://sportsmensalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/2020-Economic-Impact-of-Hunting-and-Shooting-Technical-Report-V2.pdf>

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**HONORABLE BRIAN J. FELDMAN**  
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### HONORABLE MEMBERS:

The HUNTERS OF MARYLAND, LLC support Senate Bill 847 which would repeal the statutory requirement to end Sunday hunting of deer at 10:30 am in Dorchester County.

Maryland lawmakers acknowledged there is an "overpopulation of deer in the State" via enactment of Chapters 543/544 of 2023 (*link below*); thereby, directing DNR and MDA to develop a mitigation plan by December 1, 2023. An excerpt from the Report concerning Sunday deer hunting reads as follows:

"Along with limiting what Sundays are open for deer hunting, some counties also require deer hunters to end hunting at 10:30 am. A total of 11 counties currently have these restrictions. This cutoff can impede hunter success since evening hours often can be more productive for deer hunting. Likewise, other Sunday morning activities, such as church, may prevent hunters from being able to participate.

Limiting the number of Sundays and restricting the hours available to hunt on these days traditionally have been instituted to afford other user groups the ability to use lands they otherwise feel uncomfortable on while hunting is occurring. However, deer hunting is a

demonstrably safe activity and numerous other states offer season-long Sunday hunting opportunities with little to no user group conflicts. Likewise, these conflicts appear to be rare in Maryland during Monday – Saturday when hunting and other recreational activities are occurring at the same time.

For private lands, Sunday hunting in theory should only impact other user groups if the landowner decides to allow hunting on that day. There has been legislation around additional Sunday hunting and amending the 10:30am cutoff, which would be beneficial to managing the state's deer population. Expanding Sunday hunting on public lands to include more than the eight counties where it is currently allowed, and expanding to other public properties including state parks, would also benefit deer management and landowners. A change in statute is required to add any additional Sundays and the statute would have to be amended if the goal is to allow Sunday hunting on state park lands.”

Clearly, Sunday hunting of deer is recognized as a critical tool in the management of Maryland's deer population.

Chapter 543 Acts of 2023 (Hunting, Wildlife Conservation, and Recreation – Funding, Promotion, Management, Licenses, Permits, and Stamps)

A key recommendation in the Report states the following:

“Addressing 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.”

**Clearly, Sunday hunting of deer is recognized as a critical tool in the management of Maryland's deer population.**

Further arguments in favor of lifting Dorchester's Sunday deer hunting 10:30 am hunting prohibition: (1) private property rights are at issue; and (2) many properties are not easily accessible in early morning without moving deer off the property making 10:30 am worthless for taking more deer on Sundays.

IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, Sunday hunting of deer has proven a measurably effective way in helping control Maryland's deer population. According to DNR (link below) about 10% of the 70,845 deer taken during the 2021-2022 season were taken on Sundays. More opportunities afield – especially those working families with only weekends or Sundays available to them for hunting purposes – means more youth afield, more deer harvested, and more money spent in the State and local economy. Removing the 10:30 am arbitrary prohibition in Dorchester will have a measurable trifecta impact.

<https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Documents/Maryland-Big-Game-Report-2021-22.pdf>

