



**Delegate Marc Korman, Chair
House Environment & Transportation Committee
Room 251 House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401**

RE: House Bill 778 - Natural Resources - Sunday Hunting - Migratory Game Birds

Dear Chairman Korman, Vice Chair Boyce and Members of the Committee,

The Maryland Sportsmen's Foundation (MSF) was founded to Conserve, Promote, & Protect Maryland Lands, Wildlife, & Wildlife Habitat for the future enjoyment of all citizens. With this in mind, we wholeheartedly **SUPPORT** HB778.

This bill stems from the removal of the Sunday Hunting Provision that was part of the "Hunting, Wildlife Conservation and Outdoor Recreation – Funding, Promotion, Management, Licenses, Permits, and Stamps Act." that passed last year. The premise of the bill was hunters would accept an increase in fees for their license and stamps with the hope of Maryland finally allowing Sunday Waterfowl Hunting (which most of the county already does and our neighbors, DE & PA are more than likely going to adopt this year). Unfortunately, due to a vocal minority from a few privileged landowners and guides, that provision was removed from the bill during these committee hearings. This sport belongs to ALL hunters, and should not be controlled and dictated by the wealthy few. PLEASE don't allow that mistake to continue any longer, and let's fix what should have never happened last year.

The hunting community **NEEDS** Sunday Waterfowl Hunting. Year-over-year, we are seeing a downward trend in license sales. That means less money from License & Stamp Sales. Less matching funds from the Pittman-Robertson Act. Which ultimately means less money for DNR and conservation efforts throughout the state. This isn't an issue in which simply raising fees will solve. We need to stop the downward trend and start getting more people involved, hence the nationwide "R3" program (Recruit, Retain, Re-Activate). Sunday hunting is a **MAJOR** piece to that puzzle. It is the #1 requested item by hunters via the Maryland DNR Survey (75%-80% of hunters want it) and it is the #1 tool for getting more people into the sport (The R3 programs main effort).

PLEASE get it right this session, and pass HB778. Give all hunters the **OPTION** and the **ABILITY** to get out on Sundays with their families and loved ones.

I want to be clear, this is an access and equity issue.

For years, a select few farmers/landowners/outfitters have controlled the narrative regarding Sunday Waterfowl. Selfishly, Sunday Waterfowl hunting has been held hostage because of dollars and time.

Let me explain...

Some of the opponents for Sunday Waterfowl Hunting own and operate Regulated Shooting Area's (RSA's). This is a program where you can buy/raise pen-raised ducks and release them to harvest any day of the week (including Sundays). Let's be clear. These opponents are against Sunday Waterfowl hunting for the general public, but they are ok with being able to charge you to hunt on Sundays on their land. That is a Monopoly and completely inequitable!!!

Other opponents, specifically Guides/Outfitters, of Sunday Waterfowl hunting will say "the birds need a day of rest". This is completely false. It's the Guides/Outfitters that want the day of rest! As our current regulations go, Guides/Outfitters get Sundays off and there is no monetary loss or negative impact for them. In fact, those with RSA's, as mentioned above, can make more money on a Sunday by shooting released birds than they do hunting wild birds the rest of the week. For those without RSA's, it's a free-day for them to do what they want, which I can truly appreciate. However, I don't believe that their desire for a day-off should control the opportunity for everyone else! When we are allowed to hunt on Sundays, they will have to make the decision to work and get paid, or take the day off and not. That seems fair & equitable to me...

Sunday Waterfowl hunting is available if you have enough money to buy hunts or own RSA's. The purpose of HB778 is to simply level the playing field and make Sunday Waterfowl Hunting available for all and increase participation in the sport.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Carl F. Wagner
Executive Director
Maryland Sportsmen's Foundation

Stephen R. Holt
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