

# 24 MGPA\_HB481 Doe Harvest Challenge.pdf

Uploaded by: Lindsay Thompson

Position: FAV



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Date: February 16, 2024

House Bill 481 - Natural Resources - Antlerless Deer Hunting Programs - Authorization

Committee: Environment & Transportation

MGPA Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland Grain Producers Association (MGPA) serves as the voice of grain farmers growing corn, wheat, barley and sorghum across the state. MGPA supports House Bill 481 which would allow the Department of Natural Resources to allow for an existing antlerless deer hunting program in the month of January organized for the purpose of crop damage reduction.

The National Agricultural Statistics Service estimated in 2012 that farmers experience over \$10 million in crop damage annually with 75% of that being attributed to deer. MGPA would argue that with the growing deer population in certain areas of the state and increased input costs, that dollar figure is much higher now. Maryland's deer population was estimated to be just over 200,000 white-tailed deer and 10,000 sika deer in 2022. The density of deer to suitable habitat in Maryland is high and therefore causes conflict with not only farmers and their crops but also vehicles and homeowners. Responsible hunting and utilization of depredation permits are ways we can help control deer over-population.

Another program started by the agriculture community is the Lower Shore Doe Harvest Challenges. County Farm Bureaus and grain producers host a 3-day doe harvest challenge and each antlerless deer checked in enters the hunter into a drawing. If the hunter chooses to donate the deer, it is processed free of charge (paid for my farmers and agribusinesses) and donated to the Maryland Food Banks and local food pantries.

House Bill 863 was passed in 2020 which prohibited "killing contests" for fur-bearing animals. During the 2020 session, Maryland Grain Producers Association worked with the bill sponsor to clarify and were assured that this did not impact white-tailed deer and therefore would not prohibit the doe harvest contests.

However, over the last few years, the contests have been scrutinized by the Department of Natural Resources as a violation to Section 10-404 which prohibits the sale, exchange or barter of wild game and we are hoping for official clarification to allow them to continue. MGPA worked with the sponsor to move the language to the correct section of the code last year. We also worked with the opposition to the original bill last year and were able to bring them to a "no position" stance. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources did not take a position on this bill last year. The bill in this posture passed committee in both chambers last year, made it to a 3<sup>rd</sup> reader calendar for final passage and narrowly missed passage as time ran out on Sine Die.

MGPA respectfully requests your favorable report on House Bill 481.

# **HB481\_RMC\_SupportTestimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Molli Cole

Position: FAV



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*Susan O'Neill, Chair*

*Charlotte Davis, Executive Director*

Testimony in Support of  
House Bill 481 - Natural Resources - Antlerless Deer Hunting Programs – Authorization  
Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee  
February 16, 2024

**The Rural Maryland Council supports House Bill 481 – Natural Resources – Antlerless Deer Hunting Programs – Authorization.** House Bill 481 would allow the Department of Natural Resources to conduct an antlerless deer hunting program in January as a means of reducing crop damage.

The primary objective of this initiative is to tackle the issue of overpopulation of antlerless deer on the lower shore. Since many hunters tend to hunt only for bucks, the population of antlerless deer has grown tremendously in this region. The event that has been organized is exclusively for hunting antlerless deer, and its sole purpose is to bring down the overpopulation. The hunters who take part in the event can either keep the deer they catch or donate them to the local food bank.

During the Maryland Deer Summit (hosted on May 11, 2023, at the Maryland Department of Agriculture), it was estimated by the Maryland Farm Bureau that deer cause about \$50 in damage per acre, which could add up to \$55 million statewide. Add in neighboring states, where farmers also have problems with deer, and the number would be higher still.

Deer overpopulation can be quite a detriment to rural communities, specifically farms, due to crop damage. The state of Maryland has a high density of deer to suitable habitat, which often leads to conflicts with farmers, vehicle drivers, and homeowners. To control the overpopulation of deer, it is important to practice responsible hunting and utilize depredation permits. By doing so, we can help reduce the impact of deer on crops, vehicles, and homes.

The Rural Maryland Council respectfully requests your favorable support of House Bill 481.

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is an independent state agency governed by a nonpartisan, 40-member board that consists of inclusive representation from the federal, state, regional, county and municipal governments, as well as the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. We bring together federal, state, county and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to identify challenges unique to rural communities and to craft public policy, programmatic or regulatory solutions.

“A Collective Voice for Rural Maryland”

# **HB481 Delegate Hutchinson Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Tom Hutchinson

Position: FAV

THOMAS S. HUTCHINSON  
*Legislative District 37B*  
Caroline, Dorchester, Talbot,  
and Wicomico Counties



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Health and Government Operations  
Committee

*Subcommittees*

Public Health and  
Minority Health Disparities

Health Occupations and  
Long-Term Care

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**HB481 Natural Resources- Antlerless Deer Hunting- Authorization**  
**Environment and Transportation Committee**  
**February 16, 2024**

**Why We Need This Bill**

This bill will incentivize deer hunters to participate in the last three days of hunting season in January.

The deer population on the Eastern Shore is staggering, and legalizing this contest can help manage the deer population which will help decrease crop damage on local farms. Deer hunting is also a source of food for many families on the Eastern Shore, and this incentivization could provide a family with some extra money should they win the raffle.

All hunters who participate must abide by all Maryland Game laws, tag & register each deer, and stay within the legal bagging limit, which varies by County and hunting tool used. Additionally, all deer can only be harvested in participating counties.

Maryland Code does not currently allow a person to sell, offer for sale, barter, or exchange any game bird or mammal taken from the wild. The concept of a lottery is not specified, and this bill would specify that the lottery in this contest is legal.

**What Does This Bill Do**

This bill will clarify the legality of deer hunting contests where hunters are given a raffle ticket to be put in a lottery per every bagged deer provided to potentially win \$1,000 during the last three days of the January hunting season.

These contests will incentivize hunters to come out for the last three days of the hunting.

**I respectfully ask the Committee for a FAVORABLE vote on HB481.**

# **Support - HB481 Natural Resources - Antlerless Dee**

Uploaded by: Tyler Hough

Position: FAV



## Maryland Farm Bureau

3358 Davidsonville Road | Davidsonville, MD 21035  
410-922-3426 | [www.mdfarmbureau.com](http://www.mdfarmbureau.com)

February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024

**To:** House Environment and Transportation Committee

**From:** Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

**RE:** **Support of HB0481 - Natural Resources - Antlerless Deer Hunting Programs – Authorization**

On behalf of the nearly 9,500 Farm Bureau families in Maryland, I submit this written testimony in support of HB0481. The purpose of this bill is to authorize a person to receive a raffle ticket for each antlerless deer hunted by the person during a raffle program that (1) is held in January; (2) has as its objective the hunting of antlerless deer; and (3) was previously held at least once from January 1, 2020, through January 30, 2024, inclusive.

Currently Maryland farmers take the brunt of the state's overpopulated deer herd. 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. This crop damage causes great financial hardship on Maryland Farmers. Recreational hunting is not the solution to the industry's deer problem.

MDFB Policy: The crop damage and human health issues resulting from the state's overpopulation of deer are of major concern to Maryland's farmers... We urge the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to explore, develop and implement effective, innovative practices to control the deer population in our state.

### **Maryland Farm Bureau Supports HB0481**

Tyler Hough  
Director of Government Relations

*Please Reach out to Tyler Hough at (443) 878-4045 with any questions*



**HB0481\_DNR\_INFO\_ENT\_2-16-24.pdf**

Uploaded by: Dylan Behler

Position: INFO



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

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February 16, 2024

**BILL NUMBER: House Bill 481 - First Reader**

**SHORT TITLE: Natural Resources - Antlerless Deer Hunting Programs - Authorization**

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION**

### **EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT'S POSITION**

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The Department's Wildlife and Heritage Service (WHS) is primarily responsible for a variety of different aspects of DNR's role in wildlife management. This includes monitoring wildlife populations, establishing hunting seasons, and protecting endangered species to name a few.

The proposed legislation is a specific exemption to the statute related to the sale, barter, or exchange of legally acquired deer.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

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Current law prohibits the sale, barter or exchange of whole deer. Exceptions are included for mounted specimens. The existing contest referenced by the bill requires this legislation to avoid further ambiguity as to the legal status of the contest. The bill creates a limited exception for the particular contest occurring in four counties.

### **BILL EXPLANATION**

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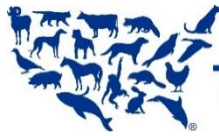
This bill authorizes a person to receive a raffle ticket for each antlerless deer hunted by the person during a raffle program that (1) is held in January; (2) has as its objective the hunting of antlerless deer; and (3) was previously held at least once from January 1, 2020, through January 30, 2024, inclusive.

Contact: Dylan Behler, Director, Legislative and Constituent Services  
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**HB481\_HSUS\_LOI.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jennifer Bevan-Dangel

Position: INFO



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES**

February 16, 2024

Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

HB 481

*Natural Resources - Antlerless Deer Hunting Programs - Authorization*

**LETTER OF INFORMATION**

On behalf of our Maryland supporters, the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) would like to provide the committee with brief background and information on HB 481, which as currently drafted would authorize a person to receive a raffle ticket for each antlerless deer hunted by the person during a certain raffle program that has as its objective the hunting of antlerless deer. 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. 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.

With regard to the regulated hunting of deer, The Wildlife Society says the following:

Killing contests differ from typical regulated hunting by the very nature of the organized public competition and prizes being given specifically for killing the largest, smallest, or most animals. "Big Buck" pools or organized record books differ from killing contests because the animals recognized in these competitions are harvested consistent with ordinary and generally accepted hunting practices and then introduced to the competition.<sup>1</sup>

As drafted, we do not take a position on this bill. However, it is critical that the committee understands we have deep reservations about this type of raffle program, and we would need to closely review any potential amendments to the bill to determine if they change our position on the legislation. We urge the committee to review all deer hunting legislation with a critical eye for avoiding commodification of this public resource and to look for opportunities to promote other solutions to human/wildlife conflict.

The HSUS urges the Maryland farming community to work with the Department of Natural Resources to expand the implementation of strategic exclusion, repellent techniques and scare tactics for reducing cervid crop damage and build on existing non-lethal damage management approaches. The use of fencing and/or electric fencing systems is cost effective during the growing season and for high value crops. These proven and sustainable damage prevention methods should be included as the cost of doing business irrespective of deer density.

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<sup>1</sup> The Wildlife Society Issue Statement: Wildlife Killing Contests <https://wildlife.org/tws-issue-statement-wildlife-killing-contests/>