



Maryland Farm Bureau

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March 4, 2025

To: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

RE: **Support of SB736 Natural Resources - Wildlife Damage Prevention and Reimbursement Fund - Establishment**

On behalf of the nearly 8,000 member families of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I submit written testimony in support of SB736 Natural Resources - Wildlife Damage Prevention and Reimbursement Fund – Establishment. This bill establishes the Wildlife Damage Prevention and Reimbursement Fund to reimburse a person for damage caused by deer, geese, and other wildlife to crops and other agricultural products

Wildlife damage is a major problem facing our Maryland Farmers. In the last time that the USDA surveyed Maryland farmers regarding crop damage, deer were responsible for roughly 77 percent and geese were responsible for roughly 11 percent. Based on discussions with farmers statewide, it is estimated that average deer damage costs the farmer roughly \$50 per acre. Considering that Maryland has more than 1.2 million crop acres, deer could be causing as much as \$60 million in damage yearly.

This legislation marks a major advancement in tackling the problem of wildlife-related damage within our state. By establishing a non-lapsing fund specifically dedicated to providing relief for agricultural losses and crop damage caused by wildlife, the law demonstrates a proactive and collaborative effort between the Department of Natural Resources and the agricultural community.

The proposed grant program serves a dual purpose. First, it offers financial reimbursement to farmers who have suffered losses due to wildlife, helping to alleviate the economic burden they face. Second, it encourages farmers to participate in the program by providing funding opportunities for projects designed to prevent future wildlife damage. This approach not only supports affected farmers in recovering from losses but also promotes long-term strategies to mitigate wildlife-related risks, fostering a more sustainable and resilient agricultural sector.

Maryland Farm Bureau Supports SB736

Tyler Hough

Director of Government Relations

Please reach out to Tyler Hough, though@marylandfb.org, with any questions