

SB0100_SUP_DNR_EEE_2-4-25.pdf

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Position: FAV



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

February 4, 2025

BILL NUMBER: **Senate Bill 100**

SHORT TITLE: **Natural Resources – Pursuing Wounded Deer After Legal Hunting Hours – Authorization**

DEPARTMENT’S POSITION: **SUPPORT**

EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT’S POSITION

The Department supports Senate Bill 100 because it codifies actions that occur on occasion during the regulated deer seasons. Previously, there was no legal or efficient means to dispatch a wounded deer after legal shooting hours unless the hunter contacted Natural Resources Police who would respond and dispatch the animal for the hunter. However, limited Natural Resources Police field staff preclude this from occurring in most instances.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Maryland deer hunters harvest approximately 80,000 deer annually during the September – January deer season. Hunters are allowed to harvest deer from 30 minutes before sunrise until 30 minutes after sunset. Hunters often take deer in the waning minutes of the legal hunting day. Due to the lateness of these encounters, deer are often not recovered until after legal shooting time has expired. Occasionally, a harvested deer may not have expired when the hunter locates it. Ethically, hunters want to dispatch the animal as quickly as possible, but current law technically prohibits hunters from being able to do this if the legal shooting time has passed. It is the experience of the Department that most hunters proceed with dispatching the animal if the location is otherwise safe and the deer is still in an area where the hunter has legal permission to be present.

BILL EXPLANATION

SB 100 authorizes the Department to adopt regulations that would allow deer hunters who hunt a deer during legal shooting hours to dispatch the animal after legal shooting hours and is still alive. Hunters must use the weapon type that is otherwise legal for use during the deer hunting season that is open. The Department anticipates creating a regulatory framework that would require the hunter to call the Department’s 24/7 Communications center and report out their information, location and activity. This would create an informed and safe contact scenario for law enforcement officers who may be called to the scene.

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Uploaded by: Jack Bailey

Position: FWA



SB0100/673427/1

AMENDMENTS
PREPARED
BY THE
DEPT. OF LEGISLATIVE
SERVICES

27 JAN 25
10:46:30

BY: Senator Bailey
(To be offered in the Education, Energy, and the Environment
Committee)

AMENDMENTS TO SENATE BILL 100
(First Reading File Bill)

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 1, in line 2, after “Hours” insert “**and Using a Light**”; and in line 6, after “restrictions” insert “**and with the use of a light**”.

AMENDMENT NO. 2

On page 1, in line 18, after “**10-410(A)**” insert “**AND (B)**”; and in line 22, strike “A” and substitute “**(1) SUBJECT TO PARAGRAPH (2) OF THIS SUBSECTION, A**”.

On page 2, after line 1, insert:

“(2) NOTWITHSTANDING THE RESTRICTIONS UNDER §§ 10-410(E) AND 10-416(C) OF THIS SUBTITLE, A PERSON WHO PURSUES A WOUNDED DEER IN ACCORDANCE WITH SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION MAY USE A LIGHT OR THROW OR CAST THE RAYS OF A SPOTLIGHT, A HEADLIGHT, AN ARTIFICIAL LIGHT, A BATTERY, OR ANY OTHER DEVICE WHILE PURSUING THE WOUNDED DEER.”

SenatorBailey_FWA_SB100.pdf

Uploaded by: Jack Bailey

Position: FWA

JACK BAILEY
Legislative District 29
Calvert and St. Mary's Counties

Budget & Taxation Committee



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February 4, 2025

**Senate Bill 100 – Natural Resources – Pursuing Wounded Deer After Legal Hunting Hours –
Authorization**

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to introduce Senate Bill 100, which would authorize hunters who wound a deer during legal hunting hours to pursue and dispatch the deer humanely after legal hunting hours.

Currently, if a deer is shot and runs off, the hunter has only until the end of legal hunting hours to track and kill the deer with a weapon. Deer that are wounded but not killed face one of two fates – either the deer will slowly die from its injuries, or it will be attacked and eaten by predatory animals such as coyotes. I strongly believe in the right of Marylanders to hunt in our State, but also that hunters have the ethical obligation to do so in a humane manner. Under existing law, a hunter who casts the rays of an artificial light while possessing or having under control a firearm or other implement by which any deer could be killed faces a prison sentence of up to six months, a fine of up to \$2,000, and must have their hunting license revoked for at least two years. I do not believe that a hunter pursuing a wounded deer to ensure it can be dispatched humanely should face these stringent penalties.

Our laws include limitations on when hunting can occur for good reason, but I believe that this bill will help us to find a balance by granting hunters authorization in this limited and specific circumstance to be able to kill a deer that they wounded to ensure it has a more humane ending than it would otherwise. This bill specifies that the deer can only be killed using the means authorized during that season to kill the deer, so firearms could only be used during firearms season and bows and arrows can only be used during bow hunting season. This bill requires the Department of Natural Resources to adopt regulations to ensure that DNR has flexibility in how this authorization is implemented and enforced.

I am submitting with this bill an amendment to make clarifying changes, specifically to make it clear that a hunter is permitted to use a light to pursue a deer in accordance with this bill. I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 100 with this amendment. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Bailey".

Senator Jack Bailey