

MDFB - Support - SB958 Agriculture - Catastrophic

Uploaded by: Tyler Hough

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Maryland Farm Bureau

3358 Davidsonville Road | Davidsonville, MD 21035
410-922-3426 | www.mdfarmbureau.com

March 4, 2025

To: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

RE: **Support of SB958 Agriculture - Catastrophic Damage Caused by Deer**

On behalf of the nearly 8,000 member families of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I submit written testimony in support of SB958 Agriculture - Catastrophic Damage Caused by Deer. This bill authorizes the Department of Agriculture to take extraordinary measures to control local deer populations and prevent future crop loss if the Department determines that deer have caused catastrophic damage to a field.

Deer 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. 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 represents a significant step forward in addressing the issue of deer damage in our state. Some areas are particularly vulnerable due to factors such as location, hunting pressure, and the characteristics of surrounding properties. In these high-risk areas, deer damage can result in the loss of up to 50% of a field's yield—or even complete devastation. SB958 provides a targeted solution, enabling authorities and property owners to take necessary, extraordinary measures in specific situations where intervention is crucial. By implementing these measures, the bill aims to mitigate current losses and establish protections to prevent future damage.

Maryland Farm Bureau Supports SB958

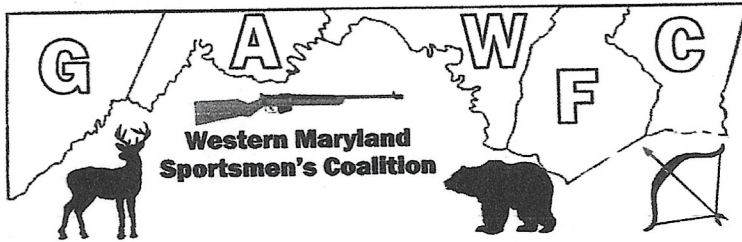
Tyler Hough
Director of Government Relations

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

SB-0958_WMSC_kelkye_UNF_2025.pdf

Uploaded by: Ben Kelkye

Position: UNF



Ben Kelkye, President
wmsc_benk@hotmail.com
ben@kelkye.com
301 401-6263

February 28, 2025

Honorable Members of the
Maryland Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Md. 21401

Subject: SB-0958 Agriculture – Catastrophic Damage Caused by Deer
UNFAVORABLE

Honorable Senators:

I represent the Western Maryland Sportsmen's Coalition, Inc. The Coalition is comprised of many hunting clubs and sportsmen's associations and thousands of their individual members living in Garrett, Allegany, Washington, Frederick, and Carroll Counties. As President of the Coalition, I work together with the leadership of these Western Maryland Sportsmen's organizations for the recognition and benefit of the sportsmen and sportswomen of the five most western counties of Maryland.

On March 4, 2025, the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee will be hearing the advantages and disadvantages of **SB-0958 (Agriculture – Catastrophic Damage Caused by Deer)**.

I, as a private citizen of this state and as the elected representative of the Western Maryland Sportsmen's Coalition, Inc., strongly urge **you to vote unfavorably on this bill as written.**

DNR's Wildlife and Heritage Service is the agency within the Department of Natural Resources charged with the responsibility of managing all wildlife species in Maryland. According to Brian Eyler, Associate Director of Wildlife and Heritage Services at the Department of Natural Resources, even though some people fear Maryland is being overrun by deer, that's not the case. The state's deer population is stable.

Hunting is Maryland's primary tool for managing the deer population. About 80,000 deer are killed during deer season. In much of the state, hunters can take 35 or more deer per year. In the suburban archery zone, hunters can take an unlimited number of antlerless deer. There's far more opportunity to harvest females than males because that's how you control the population.

The state offers permits to shoot deer for the protection of crops. These permits can be used any day of the year. According to Wildlife and Heritage, in 2022 just under 1,900 crop damage permits were issued; ***almost 10,000 deer were killed although permit holders were authorized to take as many as 34,000.*** The permits are generally underutilized.

SB-0958 is poorly written, without detail or specifics. It does seem, however, that the intent is to shift the responsibility of managing the state's deer herd to Agriculture with the intent to slaughter as many of the animals as possible utilizing non-defined methods. Would "extraordinary measures" perhaps include poison or nighttime shooting by untrained persons utilizing automatic firearms?

We are certain that the Department Natural Resources, working with the Department of Agriculture (Sportsmen and Farmers working together) can craft a reasonable and effective deer population control program for troubled areas, where needed. Let's work on that approach.

Together with the sportsmen and sportswomen of Western Maryland, we strongly urge you to vote against SB-0958 as written.

Respectfully,

Ben Kelkye

President

Western Maryland Sportsmen's Coalition, Inc.

Ben Kelkye	President, WMSC, President Frederick County Sportsmen's Council
Jerry Zembower	President, Garrett & Allegany Sportsmen's Association
Joe Winter	President, Washington County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs
Matt Guilfoyle	President, Carroll County Sportsmen's Association

Garrett

Allegany

Washington

Frederick

Carroll