



Maryland Farm Bureau

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March 5, 2025

To: House Environment and Transportation Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

RE: Opposition – HB1299 – Natural Resources - Western Maryland - Elk

On behalf of the nearly 8,000 member families of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I submit unfavorable testimony on HB1299 Natural Resources - Western Maryland – Elk. This proposed legislation would require the Department of Natural Resources to study the biological carrying capacity and cultural carrying capacity of elk in Western Maryland, with a report due to the Governor and the General Assembly by October 1, 2026, on the findings and recommendations of the study on whether elk should be reintroduced in Western Maryland.

The members of the Maryland Farm Bureau have clearly stated their position in the Maryland Farm Bureau policy book: “We oppose the reintroduction of elk into Maryland ’17.” Farmers are particularly concerned about the unintended consequences of introducing non-native animal species into the state. A notable example is the introduction of Sika deer on the lower Eastern Shore, which has significantly increased crop damage in the region. Sika deer, a small member of the elk family, are capable of devastating entire crop fields overnight. This precedent raises serious concerns for Maryland Farm Bureau members in Western Maryland, as a much larger species like elk could cause even greater destruction.

Beyond crop damage, elk have been linked to additional agricultural challenges, including fence destruction, damage to stored hay, and the transmission of bovine tuberculosis, a serious disease affecting livestock. Given these risks, the Maryland Farm Bureau opposes the reintroduction of elk, emphasizing the need to protect Maryland’s farming communities from the economic and ecological threats posed by these animals.

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