

HB 1024

Agriculture – Catastrophic Damage Caused by Deer House Environment and Transportation February 26, 2025

SUPPORT

House Bill 1024 authorizes the Maryland Department of Agriculture to take extraordinary measures to control local deer populations and prevent future crop losses if deer have caused the loss of 50% or more of crops from a single field.

The Maryland Food Bank would not be able to feed the 1 in 3 Marylanders who are at risk of food insecurity without a strong local food system, and the foundation of our food system is the farms and farmers located throughout the state. Through our Farm to Food Bank Program, we contract grow with, glean from, and accept donations from local farms whose products go directly into food insecure communities through our network of nearly 800 partner organizations and over 1,200 distribution sites across the state.

The Maryland Food Bank understands that damage to farms is damage to the food system, and just last year, Maryland Agriculture Secretary Atticks stated that 99% of farmers reported their crops suffered deer damage in a survey of all 23 counties and Baltimore City. Just last year, we heard from a farmer on the Eastern Shore who lost over \$200,000 to deer alone the previous growing season, and the Maryland Farm Bureau estimates that deer damage across the state could be as high as \$60 million annually. This bill will assist in getting Maryland farmers the help they need in controlling harmful deer populations and allow them to keep their operations productive throughout growing season. When the local food system is strong, the food bank can operate unimpeded and better serve Marylanders in need.

The Maryland Food Bank appreciates your consideration and respectfully requests a favorable report on HB 1024.