



**To: Hon. Marc Korman**  
**Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee**  
**250 Taylor House Office Building**  
**Annapolis, MD 21401**

**Re: Senate Bill 958/House Bill 1024 – Catastrophic Damage Caused by Deer**

**Position: Oppose**

**Date: 2/26/2025**

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Chairman Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and Honorable Members of the Maryland State House Environment and Transportation Committee,

As a lifelong Maryland resident, hunter, and the Assistant Manager, Mid-Atlantic States for the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF), I respectfully urge you to oppose Senate Bill 958 (SB 958)/ House Bill 1024 (HB 1024) – legislation that would authorize the Maryland Department of Agriculture to take “extraordinary measures” to manage the white-tailed deer populations in Maryland. While the intention of this bill is to assist farmers with crop depredation caused by deer, it is removing the science-based wildlife management practices as prescribed by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the designated wildlife management experts of the state.

Founded in 1989, CSF is the informed authority across outdoor issues and serves as the primary conduit for influencing public policy. Working with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC), and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), CSF gives a voice to hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers on Capitol Hill and throughout state capitals advocating on vital outdoor issues that are the backbone of our nation's conservation legacy.

Throughout the nation, the management and conservation of our cherished fish and wildlife resources is conducted in accordance with a set of principles, or tenets, referred to as the [North American Model of Wildlife Conservation](#). This Model is widely recognized as the most successful models of wildlife conservation in the world. One of the key components of the North American Model is that wildlife, including cervids, are managed using the best available science as the guide in decision making. In Maryland, the authority to do exactly that has been delegated to the wildlife management experts within the DNR.

Moreover, the DNR has a long history of working alongside the agricultural community to mitigate the impact of localized overabundance of White-tailed deer on crop production. In fact, the DNR currently has several measures available to assist farmers such as the [Deer Management Permit](#) and an [initiative to partner farmers and hunters that will assist with deer populations on agricultural land](#). Should it be determined that these existing programs are unable to address specific concerns, we strongly recommend working within the structure that is already in place, and making improvement upon it, rather than breaking up management authority between two separate agencies and setting up a new program, as these bills would do.

While the agriculture and sporting communities can and often do share very similar interests, agricultural priorities may at times also conflict with professional, science-based wildlife management principles. Given this, we ultimately believe that what this bill is proposing is not the best long-term solution for managing public trust wildlife resources that are managed largely with dollars generated by sportsmen and women through the [American System of Conservation Funding \(ASCF\)](#).

As a final point of concern, I would also highlight that SB 958 and HB 1024 are filled with ambiguity, such as the definition of “extraordinary measures” and what regulations the Department of Agriculture shall adopt to implement such a practice. With nothing less than the health of our state’s White-tailed deer populations on the line (as well as the century of conservation excellence by the DNR that has successfully rebounded deer from a point of near extirpation throughout much of their historical range), we simply can’t afford to gamble with ambiguous terms and ideas.

For these reasons, and the reasons mentioned above, I respectfully urge an unfavorable report SB 958/HB 1024.

Sincerely,



Kaleigh E. Leager

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