



**Ben Kelkye, President**  
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February 24, 2025

Honorable Members of the  
Maryland House Environment and Transportation Committee  
House Office Building  
Annapolis, Md. 21401

**Subject: HB-0511 Frederick and Washington Counties – Bow Hunting – Openly  
Carrying Handguns  
SUPPORT**

Dear Honorable Delegates:

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 February 26, 2025, the Environment and Transportation committee will be hearing the advantages and disadvantages of **HB-0511 (Frederick and Washington Counties – Bow Hunting – Openly Carrying Handguns)**.

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 support and vote favorable on this bill.**

Over the past decade, the black bear population in the western part of the state has been steadily increasing. Along with this population growth, the encounters between deer bow hunters and black bears have increased dramatically as well. More and more often bow hunters report harrowing experiences of black bears climbing the same tree that the hunter in his/her tree stand is occupying. While afield, bowhunters are vulnerable to outdoor crime and

dangerous wildlife, and should be allowed to carry a firearm for protection. The western counties of Maryland sustain the state's highest concentration of black bears.

In February of 2014 similar legislation (SB 231) passed in the state Senate by a 43 to 2 vote and subsequently through the House 120 to 9. That bill permits bowhunters who are otherwise authorized to carry a handgun to openly carry while afield for protection while hunting in Deer Management Region A.

**HB-0511** simply recognizes the regional growth population of black bears in Western Maryland counties and seeks to expand the ability of bowhunters in Washington and Frederick counties of Deer Management Region B to protect themselves from harm in extreme circumstances.

**Together with the sportsmen and sportswomen of Western Maryland, I strongly urge you to support and vote favorably on HB-0511.**

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