



Maryland Farm Bureau

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February 17, 2025

To: House Environment and Transportation Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

RE: **Support of HB766 Wildlife Advisory Commission - Membership - Alterations**

On behalf of the nearly 8,000 member families of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I submit written testimony in support of HB766 Wildlife Advisory Commission - Membership - Alterations. This proposed legislation would require that the Wildlife Advisory Commission member appointed to represent the farming community be selected from a list of candidates provided by the Maryland Farm Bureau.

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.

The Wildlife Advisory Commission serves as a crucial advisory body for the Department of Natural Resources, helping to shape policies that balance wildlife conservation with the interests of various stakeholders. Currently, the Commission includes two designated seats that must be filled by members of the farming community.

Requiring these seats to be appointed from a list of candidates provided by the Maryland Farm Bureau would enhance collaboration between the agricultural and hunting communities, fostering cooperative efforts to address Maryland's ongoing deer damage problem. This approach would ensure that agricultural representatives on the Commission have firsthand experience and a vested interest in finding effective, science-based solutions to mitigate the impact of deer on crops and farmland.

Incorporating the Maryland Farm Bureau into the appointment process for these agricultural seats is not a new concept. There is precedent for this practice, reflecting the Bureau's long-standing role in advocating for farmers and contributing to policy discussions that affect both agriculture and wildlife management.

Maryland Farm Bureau supports HB766

Tyler Hough

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Please contact Tyler Hough, though@marylandfb.org, with any questions