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House Bill 766 - Wildlife Advisory Commission - Membership - Alterations

Committee: Environment and Transportation

MGPA Position: Support

The Maryland Grain Producers Association (MGPA) represents Maryland's grain farmers growing corn, wheat, barley, and sorghum across the state. MGPA supports House Bill 766, which seeks to amend the statute governing the Wildlife Advisory Commission (WAC) by requiring that the farming community representatives be appointed from a list provided by the Maryland Farm Bureau.

The Wildlife Advisory Commission serves as an advisory body to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), making recommendations on issues related to the future of hunting and wildlife preservation in the state. One of the Commission's key roles is to include a representative from the farming community to offer insight into wildlife issues that directly affect farmers. This committee is keenly aware of the challenges that wildlife damage poses to crops and recognizes the importance of strong communication between farmers and the Department.

However, after an inquiry to DNR about the current farming community representatives on the WAC, it was revealed that the two individuals designated for these seats do not derive a significant portion of their income from farming. This is not a critique of these members personally, but rather an observation that the perspective of someone who relies substantially on farming for their livelihood would offer unique and relevant insights.

MGPA works closely with the Maryland Farm Bureau and fully supports their role in recommending qualified farmers for appointment to the Wildlife Advisory Commission. We believe this change would ensure that the farming community is represented by individuals who truly understand the realities of farming and the challenges posed by wildlife in Maryland.

We urge your favorable report on House Bill 766.