



Maryland Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary

Wes Moore, Governor

Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor

Kevin Atticks, Secretary

Steven A. Connelly, Deputy Secretary

Agriculture | Maryland's Leading
Industry

The Wayne A. Cawley, Jr. Building

50 Harry S Truman Parkway

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

mda.maryland.gov

410.841.5885 Baltimore/Washington

410.841.5846 Fax

Maryland Department of Agriculture Legislative Comment

Date: February 17th, 2026

BILL NUMBER: SB 643
BILL TITLE: Natural Resources - Hunting - Management
MDA POSITION: SUPPORT

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) respectfully submits this letter in support of *Senate Bill 643 - Natural Resources - Hunting - Management*.

From an agricultural perspective, deer overpopulation continues to present real and ongoing challenges for Maryland farmers and landowners, particularly through crop damage. Deer damage remains one of the most frequently cited wildlife-related impacts to agricultural production. Farmers and landowners across the state consistently emphasize the need for practical, effective tools to manage deer pressure on and near agricultural lands.

MDA has been actively engaged in discussions regarding deer management and Sunday hunting policies. At the request of the House Environment and Transportation Committee during the interim, MDA participated in collaborative efforts to review hunting definitions, calendars, and implementation considerations alongside the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Through this process, agricultural stakeholders underscored that no single tool is sufficient on its own, and that a combination of approaches is often necessary to meaningfully reduce crop losses.

SB 643 strengthens and clarifies management tools available where deer damage has been documented. Providing DNR with additional authority to address deer populations on qualifying properties, including the ability to authorize Sunday hunting under defined circumstances, aligns with feedback MDA has received directly from producers experiencing persistent losses. SB 643 complements the joint Deer Management Initiative between MDA and DNR by reinforcing the statutory framework supporting targeted, responsive deer management.

MDA supports SB 643 as a practical and collaborative step toward strengthening deer management options for Maryland farmers and landowners while maintaining appropriate safeguards and coordination with DNR, and respectfully requests a favorable report.

Contact: Harrison Palmer, Chief of Staff
harrisonb.palmer@maryland.gov | (410) 980-9887