



March 10, 2026

To: The Honorable Brian Feldman and Honorable Cheryl Kagan

Re: Maryland Senate Bill 643 (*An Act Concerning Natural Resources – Hunting – Management*)

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chairman Feldman and Vice-Chair Kagan,

On behalf of the members of Delta Waterfowl, both in the great state of Maryland and across North America, I want to thank you for allowing me to provide testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 643 – legislation that will finally repeal the antiquated prohibition preventing the sportsmen and women from hunting on Sundays in the state.

As background, Delta Waterfowl is a leading conservation organization founded at the famed Delta Marsh in Manitoba, Canada, with its United States Headquarters in Bismarck, North Dakota. We have members and supporters across North America, including thousands in Maryland, who represent waterfowl hunters in all arenas.

Delta Waterfowl works to produce ducks through intensive management programs and conservation of breeding duck habitat, while also providing vital waterfowl research and promoting and protecting the continuing tradition of waterfowl hunting in North America.

Review of Sunday Hunting Stakeholder Process

Senate Bill 643 comes as a direct result of months' worth of work in 2025 between members of the legislature – including several on this Committee - the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the hunting and conservation communities to find a common-sense proposal that addresses the various stakeholders' views. Importantly, it provides the DNR with the authority to effectively manage wildlife and hunting on Sundays just as it does on Monday through Saturday.

Delta Waterfowl has been fortunate enough to be part of similar efforts across the country discussing tough topics in the conservation and outdoor recreation space, but can enthusiastically say we have never seen such energy and commitment to solving a problem from members of a state legislature and state fish and wildlife agency as we saw during this process – and we were thankful to be part of the process.

Delta Waterfowl's position from the beginning of this process has, and continues to be, one of supporting the repeal of the entire section of codified language regarding Sunday hunting in Maryland law and providing DNR with the full regulatory authority to manage hunting on Sundays, mirroring their existing authority on Monday through Saturdays.

We feel these conversations, as illustrated throughout the stakeholder process, warrant a venue and process that allows for more input, discussion and dialogue among the various interested stakeholders. The regulatory process through DNR is perfectly equipped to do just that while still providing the legislature with oversight authority they currently hold.

Bifurcated Atlantic Population Canada Goose Hunting

The bill itself as it relates to hunting of migratory birds on Sundays is fairly straightforward. Of the proposals discussed during the stakeholder process that ended up in this legislation, the section dealing with a bifurcated hunting season in the Atlantic Population (AP) Zone for Canada geese is, in our opinion, the only section that requires additional nuance and context. This proposal would eliminate Maryland's compensatory waterfowl days and create a special season for Sunday hunting for the AP Canada Goose zone for junior hunters, senior hunters, apprentice hunters and full-time students.

Importantly, this proposal would include Sunday hunting opportunities for other waterfowl and migratory bird species including ducks, Mourning doves, woodcock, rails, gallinules, snipe, Resident Population (RP) Canada geese, and the Light Goose Conservation Order (LGCO) Season by virtue of DNR's authority and regulatory process.

This special provision would sunset after three years and DNR would continue to have full regulatory authority in the future. We fully support a shift towards full Sunday hunting for migratory waterfowl species, and this proposal does a great job of addressing concerns of a few of the stakeholders throughout the process while also creating a unique recruitment, retention and reactivation program within DNR designed to help get more Marylanders into the fields and on the waters.

Access and Opportunity Equity

At the core of this Sunday hunting conversation is access and opportunity equity for the residents and outdoor recreationists of Maryland. Sportsmen and women across the country often cite "lack of time" as one of the number one reasons they stop hunting. Many hunters are prevented from introducing new or novice hunters to the great outdoors because they are competing against work, organized sports and other activities on Saturdays, which is currently their only opportunity to hunt outside of the typical work and school week. Allowing an extra day to access the outdoors will provide equity and also help recruit and retain a robust hunter population that is needed to provide critical funding for the overall conservation efforts in Maryland.

Sunday Hunting has Overwhelming Support

The concept of Sunday hunting has broad support across the country, including right here in Maryland. Currently more than 40 states offer Sunday hunting for their sportsmen and women across the country. The remaining states where it is still prohibited are primarily concentrated on the east coast – or the Atlantic Flyway – and are deeply rooted in centuries old blue laws and



apathy on the part of legislators to change them despite its popularity. More than 75% of waterfowl hunters across the state surveyed by the DNR indicated they support Sunday hunting, and expanding hunting opportunities to Sundays is the single most requested policy change by hunters during the DNR's regulation setting process and scoping period.

In recent years, several neighboring states around Maryland have begun the process of deliberating and repealing these prohibitions, and to date, there has been zero negative consequences on the resource and no user-conflict for the states that have enacted this change.

In 2024, Delaware's General Assembly passed House Bill 271 (Rep Carson, et. al.) to allow Sunday hunting for game birds through their House and Senate without a single recorded no vote, and without any public opposition. This legislation was signed into law by Governor Carney in May of 2024 and Delaware sportsmen and women now have the ability to hunt migratory waterfowl on Sundays.

Additionally, in 2025, lawmakers in Pennsylvania sent House Bill 1431 (Rep. Mandy Steel, et. al.) to Governor Shapiro desk where he signed it into law with full support. This legislation gave the Pennsylvania Game Commission and their Commissioners the sole and full authority to approve general Sunday hunting dates. Additionally, Sunday hunting will be allowed on private property with the owner's written permission. In Representative Steele's All House Colleague memo on January 31st of this year, she noted "[*moreover*], some states that have recently lifted their Sunday hunting bans have reported no adverse impact on their game populations."

Sunday hunting is also supported by some of the countries' most respected conservation and hunting organizations – including many who were part of this stakeholder process. In addition to Delta Waterfowl, general support for Sunday hunting can be found from the Maryland Wildlife Advisory Commission, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, Safari Club International, National Shooting Sports Foundation, Pheasants and Quail Forever and more. These groups represent millions of sportsmen and women across the United States and help lead the way on conservation and hunting issues both in Maryland and abroad.

Sunday Hunting Has Little Impact on Waterfowl Populations or Hunter Satisfaction

The small cohort of Sunday hunting opponents will routinely cite fears of negatively impacting waterfowl populations with the legalization of Sunday hunting. It's important to stress that there is zero scientific or biological data to support that allowing Sunday hunting will negatively impact waterfowl populations. Hunting is widely considered to play a very small role in the overall impact on waterfowl populations. According to several peer-reviewed studies, nesting success and survival of adult female mallards during the breeding season account for the largest variation in

population levels. Survival OUTSIDE of the breeding season – which would include hunting seasons - only accounted for 9% variation in population levels.

In Virginia following the legalization of Sunday hunting for waterfowl, the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources estimated that there was “no measurable impact” on waterfowl populations with the additional day of hunting – adding that “[duck] harvest on Sundays was comparable to duck harvest occurring on Mondays-Thursdays and about 1/3 that of Saturdays.”

In Closing

In closing, and as we proceed forward, Delta Waterfowl respectfully urges the Maryland General Assembly to eliminate the outdated statutory restrictions on Sunday hunting and provide the DNR with full management and regulatory authority for all Sundays of the migratory waterfowl season. The stakeholder process along with this legislation has demonstrated clear public support, broad bipartisan momentum, and overwhelming evidence that Sunday hunting poses no biological or resource risk. Empowering DNR to regulate Sundays—as they successfully do every other day of the season—ensures science-based decision making, maintains legislative oversight, and delivers greater access, equity, and opportunity to Maryland’s sportsmen and women. We appreciate your continued leadership on this issue and look forward to future conversations.

Please feel free to reach out to me directly with any questions, comments or concerns at cbaird@deltawaterfowl.org.

Respectfully,



Cyrus Hunter Baird
Vice President of Government Affairs
Delta Waterfowl Foundation

Cc: The Honorable Jack Bailey