



## Maryland Farm Bureau

3358 Davidsonville Road | Davidsonville, MD 21035

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March 10, 2026

**To:** Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

**From:** Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

**RE:** Support with Amendments of SB643 Natural Resources - Hunting – Management

On behalf of the more than 7,000 member families of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I respectfully submit written testimony in support, with amendments, of SB643 – Natural Resources – Hunting – Management.

This legislation authorizes the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to permit Sunday deer population reduction on properties experiencing significant deer damage, adjusts Sunday hunting time restrictions for deer firearms season in several counties, and repeals the prohibition on Sunday hunting for migratory game birds—allowing DNR to authorize it when appropriate.

Deer damage remains one of the most urgent concerns for our members. It is estimated that deer cause at least \$8 million in losses annually to Maryland farms, and the true number is likely higher. Increasing opportunities for hunters to access the woods is one of the most effective tools available to help mitigate this damage. Expanding Sunday hunting will allow more hunters to participate, especially those whose work schedules limit them to weekends, and will provide an additional day of pressure on deer populations in the areas that need it most.

Maryland's mix of rural, suburban, and urban landscapes makes it challenging to apply a single statewide standard for Sunday hunting. A blanket regulation cannot account for local conditions or the unique circumstances farmers face.

The bill's authorization for DNR to issue Sunday hunting permits to farms with documented deer damage is a meaningful, targeted solution. It ensures that the farms most significantly impacted by deer have another tool to address escalating losses, without imposing a uniform statewide mandate.

We recognize and appreciate the concerns of the equine and trail-riding community, particularly their desire to use trails safely without unexpected interactions with hunters. The bill's modifications—requiring a 10:30 a.m. hard stop, adding a 3 p.m. to sunset restriction, and creating a 25-yard setback from designated equestrian trails—demonstrate a thoughtful balance between safety and expanded hunting access. These provisions help protect trail users while still allowing farmers and hunters meaningful opportunities to manage deer populations.



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Maryland Farm Bureau requests one amendment: removal of the language on page 7, lines 1–8 authorizing Sunday hunting for migratory waterfowl.

Many Eastern Shore farms rely on guided goose and duck hunts as a critical source of supplemental income. Expanding migratory bird hunting to Sundays raises concerns about increased pressure on already limited populations. Bag limits for these species are set by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, and harvest opportunities are already highly constrained. Allowing additional hunt days risks negatively affecting both waterfowl populations and the rural economies that depend on sustainable guided hunting.

For these reasons, the Maryland Farm Bureau respectfully requests a favorable report with the proposed amendment removing the Sunday migratory waterfowl hunting authorization.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler Hough", with a horizontal line above it.

Tyler Hough  
Director of Government Relations

*Please contact Tyler Hough, [though@marylandfb.org](mailto:though@marylandfb.org), with any questions*