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HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORTATION  
COMMITTEE

SUPPORT FOR SENATE BILL 588 (Natural Resources – Complimentary Fishing & Hunting  
Licenses)

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The HUNTERS OF MARYLAND, LLC represent the interests of Maryland’s hunting community at both the State and local level. Few realize that hunters underwrite 100% of all wildlife management/research costs through their purchase of hunting license fees/ equipment. For the record, hunters do so willingly b/c of American System of Conservation Funding, a user-pay model celebrating its 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary which also underscores the noble story of hunters as America’s original conservationists.

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The Hunters of Maryland, LLC supports Senator Simonaire’s Senate Bill 588 for the following reasons:

**RECOGNIZES SERVICE, SACRIFICE, AND ACHIEVEMENT:** Extending complimentary hunting licenses to eligible recipients is a meaningful way to honor public service, sacrifice, and notable achievement. It reflects Maryland’s longstanding outdoor heritage and affirms our respect for those who have given of themselves in service to others.

**STRENGTHENS RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND REACTIVATION (THE “3 R’s”):** Senate Bill 588 aligns with the nationally recognized “3 R’s” movement—recruitment, retention, and reactivation of hunters. Encouraging new participants and re-engaging inactive hunters strengthens Maryland’s conservation community and increases federal Wildlife Restoration

funding through the Pittman-Robertson Act. A strong and growing hunting population directly supports wildlife conservation and habitat management.

**PROMOTES EQUITY AND ACCESSIBILITY:** For some individuals who would otherwise qualify under Senate Bill 588, cost can be a barrier to participation. Providing targeted complimentary licenses: (1) removes economic barriers; (2) expands opportunities to participate in hunting; and (3) enhances diversity and inclusion within Maryland's outdoor community.

**ADMINISTRATION:** Senate Bill 588 clearly defines eligibility criteria, caps the number of licenses issued annually, requires full compliance with all existing hunting laws and regulations, and preserves oversight authority within the Department of Natural Resources. The bill is structured, limited, and responsible.

**MINIMAL FISCAL IMPACT:** Because the number of complimentary licenses is narrowly defined and limited by statute, the fiscal impact will be minimal.

**CONCLUSION:** The Hunters of Maryland, LLC view Senate Bill 588 as sound public policy. It benefits eligible recipients, strengthens conservation funding, and reinforces Maryland's commitment to outdoor heritage. It also underscores an important principle affirmed by Chapters 295 and 296 of the Acts of 2021: in Maryland, the RIGHT TO FISH AND HUNT is recognized in statute and valued as part of our shared tradition.