



To: **The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky**
 Chair, Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
 Miller Senate Office Building, 2 West Wing
 11 Bladen Street
 Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: **S.B. 390 – Sunday Hunting for Deer**

Position: **SUPPORT**

Date: **February 19, 2019**

Dear Chairman Pinsky,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, collectively representing the interests of Maryland’s 445,000 sportsmen and women, we respectfully urge you to support Senate Bill 390. This bill would enshrine current Sunday hunting allowances in statute, while also granting authority to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to allow for additional Sunday hunting opportunities for youth and hardworking families throughout the state.

Maryland already has a successful track record of Sunday hunting from 2003 when it was first authorized, to the present. However, *the current framework for Sunday hunting has resulted in a confusing patchwork of various allowances* that change depending on which side of a particular county line the property you are hunting is situated. Senate Bill 390 will provide the DNR with the ability to streamline these allowances where biologically and sociologically supported, to provide

increased access and opportunity for Maryland's sportsmen and women. Support for Sunday hunting is gaining momentum in the surrounding area as significant progress has been made in recent years to expand Sunday hunting opportunities in the neighboring states of Delaware, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and a West Virginia. As evident by last week's hearing regarding Sunday hunting for waterfowl, there is also growing support for increasing Sunday hunting opportunities in Maryland as well.

Access is a major limiting factor hindering participation in hunting, and restrictions on Sunday hunting provide a temporal-access barrier to youth and others that work or attend school throughout the week and are often involved in extra-curricular activities on Saturdays. The hunting conservation community strongly supports measures that increase access and opportunity for sportsmen and women, and we encourage you to support Senate Bill 390 to afford all families seven-day hunting opportunities for deer. Under the discretion of the DNR, this legislation would significantly improve access for Maryland hunters and would help arrest the decline in hunting participation. The number of paid license holders in the state decreased by roughly 36% from 1978 to 2018 and expanding access and opportunity would help stem the decline and provide increased certainty in conservation funding for the Maryland DNR.

Sportsmen and women are the primary funders of state-level conservation efforts in the state and are thus an important constituency that provides benefits for all Marylanders. In 2018 alone, Maryland's sportsmen and women generated more than \$26 million dollars for conservation through revenue derived from license sales and excise taxes on sporting-related goods in the unique "user-pays, public-benefits" structure known as the American System of Conservation Funding. This funding provides the lion's share of funding for the Maryland DNR and supports the agency's land acquisitions, wildlife and habitat management programs, and many other programs that benefit all citizens of the Old Line State.

Allowing public land Sunday hunting would also significantly benefit Maryland's economy, particularly in rural areas, by increasing economic output and job creation. An additional day to hunt would mean more dollars spent by hunters in restaurants, hotels, gas stations and stores throughout the state. Maryland's sportsmen and women are a significant economic force – spending more than \$815 million, supporting more than 10,700 jobs, supporting \$387 million in salaries and wages, and generating \$84 million in state and local taxes. Additionally, increasing opportunities on Sundays will allow private land owners, farmers, and others to diversify their income sources by allowing an additional day of hunting on their land, thereby helping to provide a capital influx into rural economies that were hardest hit by the recent recession. Creating additional opportunities will also encourage out-of-state hunting-related tourism and further bolster rural economies throughout the state.

The neighboring states of Delaware, Virginia, and West Virginia have recently authorized state-wide Sunday hunting for certain species and have reported great success, with no increase in conflicts among user groups, safety incidents, or detrimental impacts to their wildlife populations. Please find supportive letters attached from the Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife, and the Virginia Department of Game and Fisheries, which detail their experiences

following the authorization of statewide Sunday hunting in recent years. Additional letters from states not immediately bordering Maryland can be made available upon request.

In closing, we ask that you consider the successful track record of seven-day hunting in Maryland, the economic and conservation funding benefits to the state, and the importance of increasing opportunities for youth and families to spend time together hunting and thereby protect family traditions and Maryland's hunting heritage.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports
Delta Waterfowl
Maryland Ducks Unlimited
National Deer Alliance
National Shooting Sports Foundation
National Wild Turkey Federation (Maryland Chapter)
Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever
Quality Deer Management Association
Safari Club International
Sportsmen's Alliance

CC: The Honorable Shirley Nathan-Pulliam, *Vice-Chair*
 The Honorable Jack Bailey
 The Honorable Mary Beth Carozza
 The Honorable Arthur Ellis
 The Honorable Jason Gallion
 The Honorable Cheryl C. Kagan
 The Honorable Clarence K. Lam
 The Honorable Obie Patterson
 The Honorable Bryan W. Simonaire
 The Honorable Ronald N. Young

Attachments: Letter from Delaware's Division of Fish and Wildlife
 Letter from Virginia's Department of Game and Inland Fisheries