

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2023 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**First Reader**

Senate Bill 779 (Senator Mautz)  
Education, Energy, and the Environment

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**Natural Resources - Female Deer Hunting Contests - Authorization**

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This bill authorizes the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), for the stated purpose of managing the deer population in the State, to allow a person to sponsor, conduct, or participate in an existing, random contest held in the State during the month of January with the objective to harvest a female deer. Random lottery awards must be limited to three individuals per contest. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2023.**

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** The bill is not expected to materially affect State operations or finances.

**Local Effect:** The bill is not expected to materially affect local operations or finances.

**Small Business Effect:** Potential meaningful.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:**

*Prohibition Against Specified Organized Killing Contests*

A person is prohibited from sponsoring, conducting, or participating in a contest organized in Maryland that has the objective of killing a coyote, fox, or raccoon for prizes or monetary rewards. Statute specifies that this prohibition may not be construed to prohibit (1) a landowner or the landowner's agent or lessee from killing coyotes, foxes, or raccoons on the landowner's property, as long as the killing is not part of an organized contest or

(2) lawful dog training or dog performance competitions. There is a \$50 fine for each coyote, fox, or raccoon killed in violation of this prohibition.

### *Deer Hunting Seasons in General*

In general, DNR establishes the open season to hunt forest and upland game birds and mammals by regulation each year. DNR may adopt regulations to enlarge, extend, restrict, or prohibit hunting wildlife. There are three primary seasons to hunt deer in Maryland: deer bow hunting season; deer firearms season; and deer muzzleloader season. Deer hunting with archery equipment extends from early September through the end of January. Firearms season is two weeks in November and December starting the Saturday after Thanksgiving. There is also a short, three-day firearms season in January. There are two muzzleloader seasons: one in mid-October and a second in late December. There is also a three-day primitive deer hunt in early February.

**Small Business Effect:** To the extent that incentivizing the harvest of female deer results in an increase in overall deer hunting in the State, the bill may have a meaningful economic impact on certain types of businesses in the State. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports that, in 2011, the average hunter in Maryland spent \$49 per hunting day on trip-related expenditures. In 2011, the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Associated Recreation estimated that hunters in Maryland spend more than \$260 million annually on food, lodging, equipment, and transportation.

In addition to businesses directly affected by hunting, to the extent the bill results in a decrease in the deer population throughout the State, the bill may also affect several other types of businesses, such as farms (due to a reduction in crop damage) and businesses that own or repair vehicles (due to a reduction in deer-vehicle collisions).

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## **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See HB 1452 of 2022.

**Designated Cross File:** HB 934 (Delegate Hutchinson, *et al.*) - Environment and Transportation.

**Information Source(s):** Department of Natural Resources; U.S Fish and Wildlife Service; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 26, 2023  
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