



[Secular Coalition for Maryland](http://secular.org) Secular Coalition for
America <http://secular.org>

February 12, 2020

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

Re: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS HB0173 Natural Resources - Sunday

Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Maryland bans or otherwise limits the sale of automobiles and other vehicles (Business Regulation Code Ann. §18–101) and the sale of alcohol (Alcoholic Beverages Code Ann. §11–102) on Sundays. Financial institutions must be closed on Sunday (Financial Institutions Code Ann. §5–704). Maryland is one of eleven states where hunting is still banned or otherwise restricted on Sunday (Natural Resources Code Ann. §10-410).

Various localities have opted for a variety of exemptions from some of these Sunday activity restrictions. Every session of the General Assembly features multiple bills seeking more such exemptions. The Secular Coalition for Maryland supports these exemption requests. However, the result is a complex and confusing mix of conflicting local laws regarding what people can and cannot do on Sundays. There is an opportunity here for Maryland to simplify and modernize its laws by repealing the state level Sunday activity restrictions, eliminating the need for local exemptions.

Sunday is a special day of the week for many Christians. For other citizens the day of rest and worship may be Friday or Saturday, and for some citizens there is no god to worship and no fixed day of rest each week. Maryland law can be, and should be, more accommodating to this diversity of belief among its citizens. Legally banning business and leisure activity on Sundays favors a majority religious practice. Favoring a majority religious practice is not a proper goal of the laws. To the fullest extent feasible, our laws should accommodate minority religious practices and non-religious and anti-religion beliefs.

The decisions regarding which day to hunt, to buy or sell alcohol, to buy or sell vehicles, to initiate and process financial transactions, etc., are best left to the citizens of the state and should not be set by state laws. State government could also delegate the optional selections off days for various prohibitions to county governments without designating any such days as the state defaults. Hunting restrictions to accommodate horseback riding, hiking, and the like during the hunting season could be defined for particular hours throughout the week or rotated to different days for each week of the month instead of every Sunday.

We recommend deleting from Natural Resources Code Ann. §10-410(A) as specified in this bill these two provisions in particular:

(13) A PERSON MAY NOT HUNT MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS ON SUNDAY.

(14) A PERSON MAY NOT HUNT ON PUBLIC LAND WITHIN THE STATE PARK SYSTEM ON SUNDAY.