



MARYLAND VOTES FOR ANIMALS

PO Box 10411
BALTIMORE, MD 21209

January 15, 2021

To: House Environment & Transportation Committee
From: Lisa Radov, President and Chairman, Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc.
Re: Natural Resources - Organized Hunting Contests – Restriction – HB 293 - SUPPORT

Chairman Barve, Vice Chairman Stein, members of the Environment & Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before to you today. My name is Lisa Radov. I am the President and Chairman of Maryland Votes for Animals. We champion humane legislation to improve the lives of animals in Maryland. Speaking for Maryland Votes for Animals, our Board of Directors, and our members across Maryland, I respectfully request that the House Environment & Transportation Committee vote favorably for Natural Resources - Organized Hunting Contests – Restrictions – HB 293.

This bill would prohibit a person from sponsoring, conducting, or participating in an organized killing contest of certain mammals as defined in the bill, where the sole purpose of the event is to kill the largest number of animals possible for cash or prizes. The bodies of these animals are usually left or discarded, leaving their young to starve.

Two years ago, this committee voted favorably to protect Cownose Rays from organized killing contests solely for cash or prizes. The gruesome photos of the contests were filmed and shared on social media. Just as the Cownose Rays Bill did not tie the hands of fishermen and only applied to the killing contests, this bill only applies to organized killing contests of these mammals where the sole objective is to kill as many of that animal species as possible during the contest. It would not apply to responsible hunting or control of invasive species by people on their property.

Although some have argued that these contests are a way to control the population of these animal species, science does not back that up. The Chairman of the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission cited the contests as “counterproductive” and that they can have the opposite effect of reducing populations, as the animals increase reproduction to compensate for the sudden slaughter of a large number of animals in an area.

The general public generally opposes killing of animals unless they are legitimately being used for food, fur, or responsible species management that is recommended by the Department of Natural Resources. Many hunters eschew the contests because they feel that they are “unsportsmanlike” and do not follow the principles of responsible hunting. In September, Washington became the seventh state, joining Arizona, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, New Mexico, and Vermont, to make these contests illegal.

Last year, this same bill not only passed out of committee, but went on to pass in the House before it ran out of time due to the early end to the session. Maryland does not want to be known as a state where images of these cruel contests with piles of dead foxes, coyotes, and raccoons are broadcast far and wide on social media. We have seen the power of social media posts in the past few weeks. Let’s send the message that Maryland is not a state that allows these cruel killing contests.

I would like to thank Vice Chairman Stein for sponsoring HB 293 and urge a favorable report.

Let Kindness Reign, Vote Humane

WWW.VOTEANIMALS.ORG