



Larry Hogan, Governor  
Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor  
Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Secretary

March 31, 2021

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky  
Chair, Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Cheryl C. Kagan  
Vice Chair, Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

***Re: Letter of Support – House Bill 615 – Natural Resources – Sunday Deer Hunting and Archery Hunting Safety Zones – Prince George's County PG 402-21***

Dear Chair, Vice Chair and Committee Members,

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources supports House Bill 615. This bill ends the general prohibition of Sunday hunting in Prince George's County and allows Sunday hunting of deer from the first Sunday in October through the second Sunday in January. It also seeks to allow deer hunting on these Sundays on public lands in Prince George's County; however, there are no public lands in the county open to deer hunting at this time.

In general, the department strongly supports the self-determination of local jurisdictions to expand hunting opportunities within State, and federal rules and regulations. Hunting remains the most cost-effective method for controlling the deer population throughout Maryland. DNR advises that Sunday hunting has contributed positively to managing the State's white-tailed deer population in the 20 counties where it is now permitted. Sunday hunting can be especially important if the weather causes unfavorable hunting conditions on the Saturday of the same weekend. Likewise, many hunters only have time to hunt on weekends, so allowing Sunday hunting essentially doubles their opportunity to pursue deer.

Several counties have reduced the required distance for archery hunters in the past decade. There is no evidence that reducing the distance has led to additional accidents or conflicts with landowners or other hunters. The reduced zone increases the number of hunting areas available to archery deer hunters. HB 615 also increases access for the harvest of deer primarily in areas where deer populations are higher due to a lack of hunting pressure. As a result, the negative consequences borne of overabundant deer populations are reduced.

Deer hunting recreation will increase in Prince George's County and an estimated 50 to 100 deer would be harvested on Sundays in Prince George's County as a result of this bill. Hunters have harvested over 75,000 deer on Sundays in Maryland since becoming a legal hunting day in 2003. Deer hunters harvested 5,566 deer on Sundays during the 2019-20 Maryland hunting season.

While this bill seeks to open public lands to Sunday deer hunting in Prince George's County, there are no such lands that could be opened under existing law. Lands managed by the Maryland Park Service -- where deer hunting is open for the other six days of the week -- are expressly prohibited in statute from being open to Sunday hunting. The remaining public lands not managed by the Maryland Park Service are only open for hunting of migratory game birds, such as ducks and other waterfowl. Current statute also expressly prohibits hunting migratory game birds on Sunday.

For these reasons, the department respectfully requests the committee to grant HB 615 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

James W. McKitrick  
Director, Legislative and Constituent Service