



**To: Hon. Marc Korman  
Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee  
House Office Building  
6 Bladen Street  
Room 251  
Annapolis, MD 21401**

**Re: House Bill 715 – Fishing and Hunting Licenses and Trout Stamps – Complimentary Licenses and Stamp Exemption – Veterans Determined to be Unemployable**

**Position: Encourage Amendments**

**Date: 2/21/2024**

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Chairman Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and Honorable Members of the Maryland State House Environment and Transportation Committee

As the Senior Coordinator, Mid-Atlantic States for the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation (CSF), I respectfully urge you to amend House Bill 715 (HB 715) Fishing and Hunting Licenses and Trout Stamps – Complimentary Licenses and Stamp Exemption – Veterans to be Determined Unemployable, to include a provision that provides the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) with a reimbursement model for discounted and/or free hunting and fishing licenses within the State of Maryland. Such a reimbursement model would not only solve the loss of conservation funding for this bill, but also all discounted and/or free hunting and fishing licenses in the future. While CSF appreciates the intent of this bill, we cannot support this bill in its current form.

Founded in 1989, CSF is the informed authority across outdoor issues and serves as the primary conduit for influencing public policy. Working with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC), and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), CSF gives a voice to hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers on Capitol Hill and throughout state capitols advocating on vital outdoor issues that are the backbone of our nation's conservation legacy.

Sportsmen and women provide, on average, nearly 60% of the funds used by state fish and wildlife agencies to carry out their critical conservation missions through the “user pays – public benefits” American System of Conservation Funding (ASCF). For example, revenue from the sale of fishing licenses in Maryland goes directly to the DNR for their use in fisheries and habitat management, and also to provide quality and safe access points for residents and non-residents alike to enjoy Maryland’s waters.

Along with fishing and hunting license revenues, the Pittman-Robertson (PR) and Dingell-Johnson/Wallop-Breaux

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**Your Inside Connection to Outdoor Legislation**

(DJ/WB) Acts are two ASCF cornerstones that authorize federal funding for state fish and wildlife agencies to manage and restore fish and wildlife resources and their habitats. The distribution of these funds is formula-based, and dependent on the size of the state and the number of paid hunting and fishing license holders. To be counted as a certified paid license, the state agency must demonstrate a net profit on the sale (once overhead, processing, and admin costs are considered). This means that states that distribute free, or in some cases heavily discounted licenses, are losing funds both from the initial revenue of license sales, as well as from funds that would otherwise have been apportioned under PR and DJ/WB. To compensate for this, some states have enacted legislation that reallocates funds from the state general fund to compensate the state fish and wildlife agency for the lost revenue.

Tennessee provides a great example of an amendment that could be added to this bill to protect conservation funding to the MD DNR: Tennessee [Title 70, Chapter 2, § 70-2-104](#): *“The agency shall be reimbursed for lost revenue resulting from the issuance of free or partially discounted combination hunting and fishing licenses created by statute on or after January 1, 2017, in an amount equal to the discounts received.”*<sup>1</sup>

The increased costs of goods and services in today’s economy are also impacting states’ abilities to manage their fish and wildlife populations and habitats. During the 2023 Legislative Session, the legislature passed a comprehensive bill that CSF supported, increasing the costs of hunting licenses and stamps to provide the DNR with additional revenue to help meet the increasing costs for managing fish and wildlife, and their habitats. Continuing to provide free and discounted licenses without a reimbursement model is detrimental not only to our natural resources and their management, but also to our current and future sportsmen and women of the Old-Line State.

In closing, the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation understands and appreciates the intent of this bill and realizes the importance of outdoor recreation and the ability to provide healthy and affordable meal options for families, especially to individuals and families that are less financially secure or who have served our nation. However, offering free and discounted licenses limits the ability of the DNR to fund their conservation work, which benefits all residents. To protect the integrity of sportsmen-generated dollars through the ASCF, we encourage you to work towards providing statutory protections against lost conservation dollars by amending this legislation to require the agency be reimbursed from the general fund for any free license the legislature decides to implement. For these reasons, we ask you to amend HB 715, and with such amendments included we will gladly lend our strong support towards the bill’s passage.

Sincerely,



Kaleigh E. Leager  
Senior Coordinator, Mid-Atlantic States | Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation  
110 North Carolina Ave, SE | Washington, DC 20003  
[kleager@congressionalsportsmen.org](mailto:kleager@congressionalsportsmen.org) | 202-543-6850 X 20

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<sup>1</sup> [Reimbursement to Fish and Wildlife Agencies for Free and Discounted Licenses](#)