



NATIONAL DEER ASSOCIATION

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Delegate Kumar P. Barve, Chairman
Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

2 March, 2023

RE: Support for Maryland House Bill 983 – Conservation Funding

Dear Chairman Feldman and Committee Members:

The National Deer Association (NDA) is a national non-profit conservation organization with the mission to ensure the future of wild deer, wildlife habitat and hunting. We represent 30,000 members nationwide, including hunters, landowners and natural resource professionals. On behalf of the NDA, I am writing to provide our comments in support of Maryland House Bill 983 (HB 983) and respectfully ask that the House Environment and Transportation Committee (Committee) pass the bill for consideration by the full House.

HB 983 is a large conservation funding and access package, and the legislation has the ability to significantly impact conservation funding in Maryland, benefiting all Marylanders, including hunters and conservationists, outdoor recreators and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The bill would provide nearly \$9 million annually in additional funding that will go directly into conservation programs all Marylanders care about, while helping open new or expand access for hunters and establishing a better program/division within DNR for expanded and updated hunter recruitment, retention and reactivation (R3). Additionally, the bill includes important provisions to continue to repeal antiquated blue laws preventing sportsmen and women from hunting on Sundays.

The NDA's mission relies on science-based wildlife management decisions and strong conservation funding programs. HB 983 provides both. Specific provisions of the bill we support include, but are not limited to:

- Increasing the price of the resident and non-resident hunting licenses by a few dollars;
- Establishing a sika deer stamp to hunt sika deer;
- Removing the prohibition against hunting waterfowl on Sundays;
- Establishing the "Wildlife Conservation, Education, and Outreach Program" to provide outdoor recreation, hunting and wildlife conservation education to underserved communities; and
- Allowing non-resident students attending a college or university in Maryland to obtain a hunting license at the resident rate.

We look forward to continuing to work with the Maryland General Assembly on this legislation and similar issues surrounding deer, wildlife habitat, hunting and conservation funding, and we welcome any questions you may have regarding our position on this or similar bills.

Sincerely,

Torin Miller
Senior Director of Policy