



July 24, 2023

TO: Representative Anita Kulik, Chair
Representative David Maloney, Minority Chair
House Game and Fisheries Committee

RE: Concerns with House Bill 1522 to establish a Wildlife Rehabilitation Program and Wildlife Rehabilitation Grant Fund

Dear Chair, Minority Chair, and Members of the Committee:

We, the undersigned organizations, representing tens of thousands of hunters, anglers, conservationists, and outdoor enthusiasts across Pennsylvania, are writing to express our concerns regarding HB 1522, an act establishing the Wildlife Rehabilitation Grant Program and the Wildlife Rehabilitation Grant Fund; imposing duties on the Pennsylvania Game Commission; and making annual inter-fund transfers.

As conservationists, we do not raise issue with the establishment of the wildlife rehabilitation program itself. However, we are deeply concerned about the proposed funding mechanism outlined in the bill. The success of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation (the world's preeminent wildlife management system) is underpinned by funding generated through the "user pays-public benefits" mechanism, whereby consumptive users (hunters, anglers, trappers) pay license fees that are used to manage and protect habitat for game and non-game species alike. Unfortunately, the bill as written upends that model by diverting \$300,000 annually from the Game Fund to fund the program. The Game Fund, which is primarily funded through hunting license sales, is meant to be used for wildlife habitat protection and management and for vital scientific research conducted by the Pennsylvania Game Commission. And while a wildlife rehabilitation program may be a worthwhile endeavor, it is not consistent with the uses of Game Fund monies. Depriving these funds would not only compromise the efficacy of the North American Model but also risk impairing ongoing wildlife management efforts.

Given these concerns, we respectfully request the bill consider alternative funding sources for the program. It is our belief that exploring alternative avenues to finance the wildlife rehabilitation grant program would ensure the preservation of funding for ongoing wildlife conservation practices. We firmly stand behind the principle of responsible wildlife management and urge you to safeguard the integrity of our conservation funding.

Thank you for your attention and we appreciate your careful consideration of our concerns. Please do not hesitate to reach out to any of the undersigned organizations for more information.

CC:

Senator Greg Rothman, Chair
Senator James Brewster, Minority Chair
Senate Game and Fisheries Committee

Sincerely,

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
Delta Waterfowl
Ducks Unlimited
National Deer Association
Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen & Conservationists
Pheasants Forever
SCI: First for Hunters
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership