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Good morning members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to share my organization's thoughts about House Bill 2106 as it pertains to Sunday hunting in the Commonwealth.

My name is Brook Lenker. I am the executive director of Keystone Trails Association, a statewide organization, based in Mechanicsburg, with a mission to provide, protect, preserve, and promote hiking trails and hiking opportunities in Pennsylvania. We strive to represent the concerns and opinions of the thousands of Pennsylvanians who comprise our ranks of members, donors, subscribers, and followers. Many of these individuals are hunters. Keystone Trails Association, or KTA for short, was founded in 1956. For 68 years, we have served as a voice for those who enjoy experiencing the sounds and sights of nature on the state's glorious network of footpaths.

In past years, and prior to my tenure, KTA has expressed staunch opposition to Sunday hunting. Many of our constituents corroborated our stance, sharing their disapproval typically around safety fears and/or the erosion of the quietness revered during Sunday outings. This latter point deserves second mention. Noise induces stress. The cacophony of daily life can best be countered by immersion in the outdoors, for example, a peaceful trek through a forest or meadow. These points are underscored in a recent documentary produced by the PA Parks and Forests Foundation entitled, *The Role of Quiet*.

We understand arguments for opening more Sundays to hunting. They present expanded opportunities to hunt and mentor young people in the ways of hunting. They offer an additional tool in efforts to manage the deer herd and reduce crop damage. Connecting our youth to the natural world is a critical quest, as is the imperative of curbing the financial losses of our farmers.

Data is inconclusive on the dangers of having many Sundays available to hunt. It is a popular day to hike, bike, and relish other recreational pursuits. The discharge of firearms poses unequivocal threats to other users of public lands. They also emit a startling, disconcerting boom that disrupts the solitude and joy of another person's consummate 'day in the woods.'

Many people will avoid hiking if hunting activity is imminent. Trail-based pursuits are growing in popularity. On the Sunday hunting question, caution is warranted to avoid deterring the thousands of hikers, bikers, trail runners, and other non-hunters who permeate wildlands on Sundays, and contribute substantially to Pennsylvania's Outdoor Recreation Economy. More importantly, caution is essential because of the potential for injury from tragic hunting accidents. That's not hyperbole, but real statistical probability. More days with hunters and non-hunters intersecting in the same spaces means a greater chance of bad things happening. How will they know hunting is in progress? How will it be amply communicated?

We recognize the political inertia for allowing the PA Game Commission to include and set Sundays as they deem fit for hunting purposes, but I respectfully ask that caution be the operative word in adding further Sundays to the seasonal mix. The pace of adding days should be slow and judicious. Monitoring must be rigorous. Incidents must be thoroughly investigated, and findings shared transparently. The Commission and the legislature should evaluate the results of H.B. 2106 should it become law. If experiential conflicts increase between hunters and hikers or other trail users, or hunting accidents rise, mechanisms to retract Sundays should be authorized. Another consideration might be to limit any Sunday hunting to state game lands and private farmland.. This would allow other public lands, like state forests, to remain respites for trail-based recreation on those days. .

The Sunday hunting issue is much more than a matter of jettisoning a blue law. It is about the rights of the citizens of the Commonwealth to have most of their sublime fall Sundays, free from the danger of a stray bullet, to savor the serenity of Penns Woods, and take their children safely outside.

Thank you for considering our perspective.