



Chair Kulik, Chair Maloney and Prestigious Committee Members,

My name is John Bingaman Pennsylvania State Director for Hunter Nation. I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify regarding several bills that address issues that are of critical concern to Hunter Nation and the thousands of Pennsylvania hunters that we represent. I am accompanied today by several other members of Hunter Nation and we come before you today to support the package of bills introduced by Representative Mandy Steele. The bills that I will be addressing are HB 2106, HB 2107, and HB 2108.

One of the biggest issues adversely impacting hunting in Pennsylvania is opportunity. If our long-established hunting heritage in Pennsylvania is to survive, we need to make sure that we maximize opportunities to hunt. At Hunter Nation, we strive to make the opportunity to hunt available to all people in this great country. Part of that mission is expanding habitat available to hunters. But another part of that mission is making time available for hunters who wish to carry on our nation's great hunting tradition or pass that tradition on to their children. This has become more and more difficult here in the Commonwealth because of busy work schedules. Many Pennsylvania workers are unable to take a day off during the week, and many have to work weekends. For them, Sunday is the only readily available day for hunting. This is why Hunter Nation has fought so hard to keep Saturday for the opening day of the deer rifle season. These are hard-working, blue-collar Americans who should not be excluded from hunting on Sundays. The time has come to consider these families and allow Sunday hunting in Pennsylvania. That is why Hunter Nation strongly supports the Sunday hunting portion of HB 2106.

Historical statistics indicate hunting is an inherently safe activity for participating hunters and the non-hunting public alike. Hunting is a safe activity that brings family and friends together. Statistically, hunting is safer than other outdoor activities such as hiking, bike riding, and horseback riding.

While even one hunting related accident is one too many, the most recent PGC Hunting-Related Shooting Incident (HRSI) Annual Report from 2022 shows only 14 reported incidents with no fatalities. This is the lowest number of reported HRSIs recorded in Pennsylvania since 1915. Of those 14 reported incidents only hunters were involved.

There are often objections to the expansion of Sunday hunting opportunities based on concerns with shared time afield for both hunters and non-hunters. However, if the event calendars for any of the more popular outdoor non-hunting activities are reviewed, you

find a significant number of events are scheduled on Saturdays throughout the year, including some of the prime spring and fall hunting days. Providing the PGC with regulatory authority for Sunday hunting, and any potential gains in Sunday Hunting opportunities authorized by the PGC, would seem to be a non-issue in the shared use of our outdoors. Hunters are already sharing every day we hunt with the non-hunting public. Hunter Nation asks the legislators to please allow hunters to share valuable time on Sundays as well.

Hunter Nation also acknowledges that farmers feel that hunters trespassing on private property is a problem in Pennsylvania and HB 2106 also addresses that issue. The language of the bill is a product of the combined efforts and collaboration of the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, Hunters United for Sunday Hunting, Hunter Nation, with input from the Pennsylvania Game Commission and Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen and Conservationists. Farmers and landowners have long dealt with this problem. This bill will benefit these stakeholders, and considering that 83% of land in the state is privately owned, this is a significant and much needed legislation. It is worth pointing out that HB 2106 is designed to afford property owners protection from trespassing hunters, while ensuring due process for the accused.

Another bill Hunter Nation supports is HB 2107. Every year, farmers in the Commonwealth sustain enormous financial losses due to wildlife crop damage. Responsible hunters are willing and capable of helping farmers to reduce those losses. HB 2107 deals with crop damage mitigation and creates an opportunity to bring hunters and farmers together for a mutual purpose. This bill is a collaboration between Hunter Nation and the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau and will help streamline the process of a farmer finding a hunter who is willing to assist the farmer, by way of an online registry. These willing responsible hunters will help Commonwealth farmers reduce their wildlife crop damage.

HB 2108 is another bill that Hunter Nation supports. As you are aware, the Board of Commissioners of the Pennsylvania Game Commission is made up of nine competent citizens of this Commonwealth who are well informed on the subject of wildlife conservation and restoration. They are responsible for ensuring the Commission fulfills its Mission Statement to manage and protect wildlife and their habitats while promoting hunting and trapping for current and future generations. HB 2108 would ensure at least one of those nine citizens be knowledgeable of, and actively engaged in, normal agricultural operations. This will ensure the voices of our partners in agriculture, a leading industry in Pennsylvania, are recognized. It is my understanding that two of the current nine Commissioners would meet this requirement.

In summary I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf of Hunter Nation today. I hope something I have said today has resonated with you and has helped you to understand why this package of bills is needed and will benefit Pennsylvanians. I would also like to personally thank Representative Steele for her commitment to supporting our values and her effort in bringing the aforementioned groups

together. Through her leadership and hard work all the groups had an equal and fair voice in this process.

Thank you,

John Bingaman
Hunter Nation, State Director

