

Maryland Bill Establishes Minimum Hunting Age

Youth Recruitment Efforts in Jeopardy

Legislation has been introduced in Maryland that will establish a minimum hunting age while devastating youth recruitment efforts.

House Bill 655, sponsored by Del. Barbara Frush, D-Beltsville, and Virginia P. Clagett, D-Annapolis, prohibits anyone under the age of 13 from receiving a hunting license. Under current law youth under the age of 15 must pass a hunter education course and be under the supervision of a licensed hunter. There is no justification for establishing a minimum age requirement.

“If passed, this bill will have a devastating effect on recruiting young hunters and the future of wildlife conservation in Maryland,” said Rob Sexton, USSA vice president for government affairs. “The bill is a deliberate attempt to sabotage the future of hunting.”

Research has shown that people are far less likely to take up hunting after age twelve. Research also has shown that young hunters are the safest hunters in the field when accompanied by an experienced mentor. In other words, this bill does nothing to ensure safe hunting, but it will accelerate the destruction of hunting.

“Parents, not the government, are far more equipped to know when their sons and daughters are ready to hunt,” said Sexton.

This bill goes against the nationwide trend of lowering barriers and easing restrictions on recruiting the next generation of sportsmen. Twenty-two states, including Virginia, have passed Families Afield-style measures since 2004 aimed at improving youth participation and recruitment.

House Bill 655 has been referred to the House Environmental Matters Committee.

Take Action! Maryland sportsmen should contact their legislator to reject HB 655. Let them know that you oppose unnecessary restrictions on youth hunting. To find your representative, call (410) 946-5400 or use the Legislative Action Center at www.ussportsmen.org.

The U.S. Sportsmen’s Alliance is a national association of sportsmen and

sportsmen's organization that protects the rights of hunters, anglers and trappers in the courts, legislatures, at the ballot, in Congress and through public education programs. For more information about the U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance and its work, call (614) 888-4868 or visit its website, www.ussportsmen.org.