



March 3, 2025

Representative Jon G. Burns
Speaker of the Georgia House of Representatives
332 State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

Re: House Bill 451; Hunting Safety in Grades Six Through Twelve

Position: Support

Dear Speaker Burns and Members of the Georgia House of Representatives,

On behalf of the undersigned conservation organizations, we write to express our support of House Bill 451 which would provide that local boards of education be authorized to provide instruction in hunting safety in grades six through twelve by Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) certified instructors beginning in the 2026-2027 school year.

In a world that is becoming increasingly digitized and distant from nature, opportunities to participate in activities that get young people outdoors is pivotal to ensuring the health and well-being of Georgia's youth. Students in grades six through twelve are in very transformative years and providing them with education on hunter safety as well as the role that hunters play in wildlife conservation is essential.

Furthermore, participation in hunting has generally been on the decline for years now. Efforts to bring voluntary hunting safety education classes into the classroom would bolster hunter recruitment, retention, and reactivation (R3) efforts. Introduction to hunting and the shooting sports through a controlled and well-developed curriculum is an excellent way to recruit new hunters. These efforts are critical to ensuring the future of conservation funding through the "user pays – public benefits" structure of the American System of Conservation Funding. For example, in 2023 alone, Georgia's sportsmen and women generated \$85 million in conservation funding

through the ASCF, which further highlights the importance of ensuring the next generation of conservationists.¹ As today's sportsmen and women age out, they take their critical conservation dollars with them, leaving a funding gap to be filled by the next generation of sportsmen and women.

By allowing local school districts to offer courses in hunting safety education, students will receive instruction and guidance from DNR-certified instructors and obtain the knowledge and experience needed to participate in our shared sporting heritage. Upon successful completion of the course, students will be well equipped to get outdoors and participate in our time-honored traditions where they will hopefully spark a passion that will carry with them for the rest of their lives.

In closing, to help conserve Georgia's storied traditions for generations to come, we respectfully encourage you to support House Bill 451. Thank you for considering our comments, and please let us know if you would like additional information.

Sincerely,

Blood Origins
Boone and Crockett Club
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Delta Waterfowl
Ducks Unlimited
Georgia Wildlife Federation
Heritage and Wildlife Conservation Council
National Deer Association
National Rifle Association
National Shooting Sports Foundation
National Wild Turkey Federation
Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever
Safari Club International

¹ <https://s3.amazonaws.com/cdn.congressionalsportsmen.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/05162023/Georgia-ASCF-Fact-Sheet.pdf>