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**RECREATIONAL ANGLERS
WORKING TO CONSERVE, PROMOTE, AND ENHANCE MARYLAND'S
MARINE RESOURCES**

Date: March 6, 2020

To: Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chairman
Honorable Dana Stein, Vice Chairman
Honorable Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee

Re: **House Bill 1498**

CCA Maryland Position: Oppose

At a time when oyster populations are at a fragment of their historical levels, and new science is being used to guide towards sustainable management of our wild oyster resource and fishery, it would be very short sighted to move forward with any loosening of enforcement measures or deterrents for poaching.

This bill would weaken penalties for poachers and allow convicted poachers to re-enter the fishery after 5 years.

Given the remote areas where oyster harvest occurs, and the limited resources of the Natural Resources Police to cover such a broad profile in our state, weakening the consequences for poaching is unacceptable.

The harvest of our shared natural resources is a privilege, and along with that privilege comes the responsibility to follow the rules and regulations set out by law and regulation. In the simplest terms, poaching is theft, and strong consequences should exist when laws are broken.

We respect that the vast majority of all harvesters and users of the resource are law abiding and well-meaning individuals, and believe that this bill will lessen deterrents to poachers, and further complicate the already difficult task of enforcing natural resource laws, and promoting the sustainable management of our shared and public natural resources.

For these reasons, we respectfully request an unfavorable vote on HB 1498.

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