



HB1228 Natural Resources – Oysters – Spat, Shells, and Substrate

Environmental and Transportation Committee:

Chair: Delegate Kumar Barve; Vice-Chair: Delegate Dana Stein

Testimony from:

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Chair Pinsky and members of the Education, Health, and Environment Committee thank you for allowing me to provide this testimony in support of HB1228 on behalf of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES).

Since its founding in 1925, UMCES has been leading the way toward better management of Maryland's natural resources and the protection and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay. It's often referred to as "the institution of the environment for the state of Maryland."

UMCES' oyster cultivation facility at Horn Point, the largest oyster hatchery on the East Coast, is a focal point for oyster restoration and research in Maryland and the region. Researchers are working cooperatively with other organizations to continue to improve production methods and learn more about how best to return our once abundant oyster resource to the Chesapeake. Future efforts are aimed at improving bottom preparation techniques to enhance survival, obtaining good quality estimates for improving deployment techniques for the most efficient grow-out, and continuing to improve husbandry for the hatchery. Over the last 10 years UMCES has produced an average of 1.1 Billion spat per year.

In partnership with DNR, UMCES scientists have recently led the develop of an oyster stock assessment. Additionally, UMCES has a seat on the Oyster Advisory Commission which recently developed a series of consensus-based recommendations on enhancing oyster populations.

As a part of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, Maryland committed to restoring oyster populations in five tributaries in Maryland's portion of the Chesapeake Bay by 2025. The tributaries chosen for restoration in Maryland are Harris Creek, Little Choptank, Tred Avon, Upper St. Marys and Manokin Rivers. UMCES is a key partner in restoring these reefs along with the Department of Natural Resources, Oyster Recovery Partnership, NOAA, Army Corps, and others.

As a key partner in oyster restoration, UMCES supports this bill and is ready to assist in achieving its many goals, such building a facility to produce additional spat, identifying and enhancing shell availability, assessing suitable substrate for restoration and undertaking a

survey of current and potential oyster bottom. UMCES stands ready to assist the State of Maryland in enhancing oyster populations and supports HB1228.

UMCES supports HB1228 and seeks the Committee's favorable report.