

JACK BAILEY
Legislative District 29
Calvert and St. Mary's Counties

Budget & Taxation Committee



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Annapolis Office
James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 401
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3673 • 301-858-3673
800-492-7122 Ext. 3673
Jack.Bailey@senate.state.md.us

District Office
Dorsey Professional Park
23680 Three Notch Road, Unit 101
Hollywood, Maryland 20636
240-309-4238

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Senate Bill 207 – Natural Resources – Northern Snakehead – Common Name

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to introduce Senate Bill 207, which is intended to address the challenges created from the presence of the invasive snakehead fish in Maryland's waterways. This bill seeks to encourage consumption of the snakehead as a means to better manage its population within our waters by giving the snakehead a new, more appealing common name, the "Paxtuent fish."

As we all know, the snakehead has proven to be a threat to the ecological balance of our state. Its aggressive nature and ability to thrive in diverse environments, including those with low oxygen levels, have raised concerns among environmental experts and watermen for many years. One potential solution that has been pursued to reduce Maryland's snakehead population has been to catch them for use as food. I have had a number of discussions with stakeholders who work to increase the consumption of snakehead, and it is clear that these efforts suffer from one major problem - the snakehead has a limited market of potential consumers because of its unappetizing name.

For this reason, Senate Bill 207 would rename the snakehead fish to the "Patuxent fish" to emphasize the importance of preserving the natural heritage of our Patuxent River, its tributaries and the counties it touches, including Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, and St. Mary's. By linking the invasive species to this important waterway, we can work to protect and conserve our native ecosystems, while also providing Marylanders with a renewed opportunity to enjoy a fish with a much more common and desirable name.

Altering the common name of a fish has become a successful way to encourage their harvest and consumption. For example, the Dolphinfish became Mahi-mahi, the Slimehead became the Orange Roughy, the Hogfish became King Mackerel, and the Patagonian Toothfish became Chilean Sea Bass. In this case, I believe that an appetizing name is all that stands in the way of consumer acceptance. Renaming the snakehead to make it more marketable would have substantial benefits for our watermen, our economy, and our ecosystem.

I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 207. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Bailey', written over a horizontal line.

Senator Jack Bailey