



Senate Bill 0879

Shellfish Aquaculture – Harvest Hours

Date: February 27, 2024	Position: FAVORABLE
To: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee	From: Kathy Brohawn Chair

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Maryland Aquaculture Coordinating Council (ACC) **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill (SB) 0879. SB 0879 would require the Department of Natural Resources, in consultation with the ACC, to establish harvest hours for areas specifically leased for shellfish aquaculture.

As shellfish aquaculture has grown in Maryland, so has the diversity of operations and practices. This includes operations that harvest year round, including the warmer summer months. Summer time harvests are subject to additional harvest control measures established in the National Shellfish Sanitation Program to decrease the risk of illness. These measures are designed to promote proper handling of shellfish during warmer months to maintain safe and wholesome products for consumers.

One consequence of these control measures is that, during certain months, harvesters are severely limited in the time allowed to work privately cultivated shellfish leases. In some cases this limit can be as little as four hours allowed for working a shellfish lease making efforts uneconomical for some.

Allowing the Department of Natural Resources to establish harvest times for shellfish aquaculture, in consultation with the ACC, would allow for consideration of the safety of harvesting as a driver of harvest times. The Maryland Departments of Health, Environment, and Natural Resources administrate the National Shellfish Sanitation Program for the State and all have representatives appointed to the ACC.

The Maryland Aquaculture Coordinating Council urges the Committee’s FAVORABLE report on SB 0879.

For more information, please contact Brian Callam, Ph.D., Director of Aquaculture and Industry Enhancement Division, Department of Natural Resources, at Brian.Callam@maryland.gov.