

Hello,

I am requesting a unfavorable report on Senate bill 1053/House bill 123

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Captain Travis Long, and I have the privilege of guiding anglers through the breathtaking waters of Chesapeake Bay, a place renowned for its world-class fishery. Our early spring fishing experiences offer a unique, safe, and memorable opportunity for anglers to catch and release trophy fish, a true once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Catch and release is a universally accepted practice, celebrated for its ability to both conserve fish populations and provide anglers with an enriching experience. It is a testament to our commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship, ensuring that our fishery remains vibrant for generations to come. Notably, no fishery has suffered due to catch and release practices; rather, it is overfishing that poses a significant threat to our aquatic ecosystems.

During the recent AELR meeting, it was highlighted by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) that extending the current fishing closures into March would not yield any measurable conservation benefits. This assertion is backed by rigorous scientific research, which indicates that catch and quick release in water temperatures below 70°F results in a mere 3% mortality rate. This low impact underscores the effectiveness of catch and release as a conservation tool.

It is imperative to consider the broader implications of the proposed bill. Beyond impacting fishing guides, it threatens to impose unnecessary economic burdens on local businesses, including gas stations, marinas, tackle shops, and restaurants. These establishments play a crucial role in our community's economy and rely heavily on the fishing season for their livelihood.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the spawning areas of Striped Bass in the Bay are already protected through fishing restrictions, demonstrating our ongoing commitment to preserving this vital species. The proposed bill, unfortunately, overlooks the fact that catch and release practices are not the root cause of the challenges facing Striped Bass populations. Rather, it is a sustainable approach that allows us to enjoy and appreciate our natural resources without compromising their future.

In light of these considerations, I respectfully urge you to vote against the proposed bill. Doing so will not only support the sustainable practices that have long benefited our fishery but also safeguard the economic well-being of our community.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration on this matter. I am confident that together, we can ensure the continued health and prosperity of Chesapeake Bay's fishery and the communities that depend on it.

Sincerely,

Captain Travis Long #16320