



Chesapeake  
**OYSTER ALLIANCE**  
*10 Billion for the Bay*

ADVOCATES FOR HERRING BAY | ANNAPOLIS AQUACULTURE | ANNAPOLIS MARITIME MUSEUM | ARUNDEL RIVERS FEDERATION  
BLACK GIRLS DIVE FOUNDATION | BLUE OYSTER ENVIRONMENTAL | CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION | CHESAPEAKE BEACH OYSTER CULTIVATION  
SOCIETY | COASTAL CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION MARYLAND | FRIENDS OF ST. CLEMENTS BAY | LIVING CLASSROOMS FOUNDATION  
MARINE SCIENCE FOUNDATION | MARK STREET VENTURES | OYSTER GIRL OYSTERS | PIRATES COVE OYSTER COMPANY  
SEVERN RIVER ASSOCIATION | SHORERIVERS | TRUE CHESAPEAKE OYSTER COMPANY

**House Bill 1223**

Tidal Fish Licenses - Oyster Authorizations – Reinstatement

DATE: March 6, 2024

POSITION: **OPPOSE**

The Chesapeake Oyster Alliance is a broad coalition of 111 (and counting) non-profits, academic institutions, oyster growers, and business owners with the shared goal of adding 10 billion oysters in the Bay by the year 2025. With a focus on oyster restoration, science-based fishery management, and increased aquaculture, the Chesapeake Oyster Alliance aims to accelerate oyster recovery efforts and in so doing the recovery of Chesapeake Bay.

In its 2009 report, the Maryland Oyster Advisory Commission stated, *“there is no single factor more important to the future of ecologic restoration and aquaculture than to address and dramatically reduce ongoing illegal oyster harvesting activities.”* Oyster poaching is a significant impediment to oyster recovery. Over the past 5 years, there have been nearly 90 citations issued for oystering in sanctuaries, which represents a fraction of poachers who were caught. The statutory requirement that an individual’s authorization to catch oysters be revoked if they are found guilty of one of these five violations reflects the seriousness of these actions and are intended to serve as a strong deterrent to those who would consider skirting these regulations for monetary gain.

We, the above-listed members of the Chesapeake Oyster Alliance, **strongly OPPOSE House Bill 1223** which would weaken deterrents for oyster poaching penalties and undermine oyster recovery:

HB1223 prohibits the Department of Natural Resources from revoking an oyster authorization unless a citation results in a guilty verdict in District Court. This fails to recognize that many revocations result from points accumulated on a fishing license, rather than a singular offense. Removing the ability of DNR to revoke an oyster authorization for repeated bad actors is a significant weakening of poaching penalties. HB1223 also allows for reinstatement of an oyster authorization which prevents those on the waitlist from accessing opportunities in the oyster fishery while those with revoked licenses get to re-enter the fishery.

Those who poach oysters undermine the efforts to remedy overfishing, weaken oyster recovery and threaten the future of the oyster industry. Weakening oyster poaching is a detriment to the honest efforts of watermen who comply with harvest regulations.

The Chesapeake Oyster Alliance respectfully requests an **unfavorable** report on HB1223. Please contact Tanner Council ([tcouncil@cbf.org](mailto:tcouncil@cbf.org)) with any questions.