



February 20, 2026

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Chair, Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Guzzone and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Oyster Recovery Partnership, we respectfully submit this letter in support of Senate Bill 558. SB 558 establishes the Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program within the Department of Natural Resources to provide funding for oyster propagation and replenishment projects that mitigate the impacts of transportation-related activities. The bill legislates the annual appropriation of \$2 million.

The Oyster Recovery Partnership (ORP) is a 30-year-old Annapolis-based nonprofit organization that helps execute Maryland's oyster restoration agenda. ORP's mission is to support and promote both the economic and ecosystem benefits of oysters. We carry out our mission by working with the Department of Natural Resources, the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, Maryland Watermen, and other partners. Each year ORP coordinates the production of billions of new oysters planted in Chesapeake Bay.

For over a decade ORP has collaborated with the Department of Natural Resources and Maryland's county oyster committees to administer and effectively use funding provided by Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT). The funds are used to support the practice of shell repletion and to produce and plant new oysters. These practices are considered best management practices to maintain a sustainable oyster fishery and to restore the broader population of oysters. These practices also mitigate dredging and channel maintenance activities known to affect oyster habitat. A dedicated mitigation program ensures that those impacts are addressed in a structured and consistent manner.

In addition to supporting the fishery, oyster restoration provides broader public benefits, including improved water quality, habitat enhancement, and ecosystem resilience within the Chesapeake Bay.

For these reasons, the Oyster Recovery Partnership respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 558.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Ward Slacum'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

H. Ward Slacum
Executive Director
wslacum@oysterrecovery.org
Oyster Recovery Partnership