



Testimony in Support of House Bill 947 – Natural Resources -Commercial Blue and Flathead Catfish Finfish Trotline License - Alterations

February 27, 2026

Dear Chairman Korman,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT** of **HB947** on behalf of ShoreRivers. ShoreRivers is a river protection organization on Maryland's Eastern Shore with more than 2,000 members. *Our mission is to protect Maryland's Eastern Shore waterways through science-based advocacy, restoration, education, and engagement.*

This legislation **alters the commercial blue and flathead catfish finfish trotline license to allow a person to use a gill net with a mesh size of not more than 7 inches.** These regulations will improve the fisheries for these invasive species, which wreak ecological and economic devastation on our Chesapeake ecosystem. Blue and channel catfish threaten native fish populations—they are aggressive, adapt to a variety of water conditions, and can outcompete native fish for food and resources. They have proliferated throughout the Bay watershed due to these aggressive tendencies, and while recreational fishermen do catch some, it is really our commercial watermen who make the largest impact in reducing the population of these invasive species. These invasive species pose a major risk to commercial fisheries throughout the Bay, and particularly on the Eastern Shore where many of our commercial watermen operate.

Many critical Chesapeake species such as blue crabs, eels, striped bass, and white perch are struggling due to the prevalence of these catfish, which significantly reduces the success and viability of our commercial fisheries. The more these harmful fish species are removed from our local waterways, the healthier our aquatic ecosystems and local economies will be. **Removing as many invasive blue and channel catfish as possible will support Maryland's commitment to improving the health of Chesapeake Bay and supporting the local community that depends on clean water and thriving native ecosystems.** Improving regulations to the fishery will help drive the demand for more of these harmful invasive fish to be caught and consumed.

For these reasons, ShoreRivers **urges a favorable report on House Bill 947** and encourages the legislature to support policies that invest in watershed health and resilient natural systems across Maryland.

Sincerely,

Zack Kelleher, Sassafras Riverkeeper on behalf of:

ShoreRivers

Scott Budden, Executive Director

Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper | Matt Pluta, Choptank Riverkeeper

Ben Ford, Miles Wye Riverkeeper | Zack Kelleher, Sassafras Riverkeeper