



120 SPEER ROAD, SUITE 1
CHESTERTOWN, MARYLAND 21620
PHONE: 410-810-1381
FAX: 410-810-1383
www.delmarvafisheries.org

Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

Testimony in **OPPOSITION** to **Senate Bill 948**

Natural Resources - Commercial Oyster Authorizations - Requirements

Tuesday, February 25, 2020

The Delmarva Fisheries Association (DFA) urges an **unfavorable** report on Senate Bill 948, which is an act intended to thin the ranks of commercial watermen and phase out the wild oyster fishery in the Maryland.

Any proposal to limit the number of tidal fish license (TFL) holders that are authorized by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to harvest oysters for sale should be referred to the Oyster Advisory Commission (OAC) for consideration and recommendation within the context of DNR's fishery management plan for oysters. Indeed, in the wake of the General Assembly's override earlier this session of the Gubernatorial vetoes of SB830/HB720 in 2019, which reconstitute and reorganize the OAC, any proposed fishery management actions like those embodied in SB 948 should be referred to the OAC – where de-politicized, collaboratively developed and science-based fishery management recommendations may be developed.

Among the many stressors and challenges facing oyster restoration and propagation in the Maryland today, the number of licensed commercial fishermen who may opt to harvest oysters should be the least of the General Assembly's concern. A legislative mandate arbitrarily limiting entry into the commercial oyster fishery ignores the proven value of a prudently managed wild oyster fishery being a best management practice towards realizing more oysters in the water.

The members of DFA are committed to prudently managed aquatic resources and support DNR's role in coordinating such efforts across fisheries and constituencies.

For these reasons, DFA urges an UNFAVORABLE report on SB 948.

CONTACT: Capt. Robert Newberry at 410-708-9851 or rnewberry56@gmail.com
Chip MacLeod at 410-810-1381 or cmacleod@mlg-lawyers.com