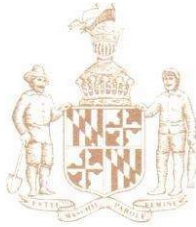


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*The Maryland House of Delegates*  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 12, 2020

HB 911  
Oyster Sanctuaries Management

Good afternoon Chairman Barve and members of the committee,

The veto of last year's oyster bills (HB 720/SB 830) delayed the timeline for meetings of the Oyster Advisory Commission and various reporting dates on work for an updated Oyster Fishery Management Plan. HB 911 reestablishes the time line for meetings of the Oyster Advisory Commission (OAC), sets interim reporting deadlines, and references current restrictions on existing oyster sanctuaries.

This emergency bill (1) changes the deadline (from June 1, 2019, to April 1, 2020) for convening the reestablished Oyster Advisory Commission (OAC) under Chapters 5 and 9 of 2020 and (2) repeals an authorization under Chapters 5 and 9 for the OAC to meet and deliberate in closed session under specified circumstances. The bill maintains the final two interim reporting deadlines included in the original legislation and the final report deadline. A friendly amendment before you today adds an additional interim report deadline, and shifts the final report's due date to allow for development of a science-based model required for development of a revised fishery management plan. The bill also clarifies that the Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) implementation of the 2019 fishery management plan for oysters must be consistent with a current restriction on reduction or alteration of existing oyster sanctuary boundaries.

Maryland has a long history managing the oyster fishery. Oyster sanctuaries are a critical element of the strategy to protect oysters in the Chesapeake Bay. These efforts improve the health of the Bay and those who depend on the Bay. I urge a favorable report for HB 911.