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**RECREATIONAL ANGLERS
WORKING TO CONSERVE, PROMOTE, AND ENHANCE MARYLAND'S
MARINE RESOURCES**

February 22, 2021

To: Honorable Delegate Anne Healey, Chair
Honorable, Marvin E. Holmes, Jr., Vice-Chair
Honorable Members of the House Rules Committee

Re: House Joint Resolution 1 – Natural Resources – Fishing – Wild-Caught Blue Catfish

CCA Maryland Position: SUPPORT

Since their introduction in the 1970's blue catfish have spread to nearly all tidal portions of Chesapeake Bay watershed. As a non-native species and top predator, blue catfish are invasive in nature, and directly impact species native to the Chesapeake. Throughout their life-cycle, blue catfish feed on a diverse number of prey items ranging from shellfish to blue crabs, and even finfish. Unfortunately, these finfish in a blue catfish's diet include juvenile striped bass, as well as many other ecologically and economically important species.

Blue catfish are available in large and marketable quantities throughout Maryland waters and have been a growing target of watermen as their range has expanded in the region. Blue catfish have a firm and flaky meat and can fill an important demand for affordable fish protein, while supporting valuable jobs.

Unfortunately, current federal regulations have hindered efforts to develop markets and processing centers which provide important jobs and affordable and locally produced protein for American families. USDA regulations crafted to protect domestic catfish markets from imported alternatives have limited the processors in the Chesapeake by placing burdensome and costly inspection requirements on local processors.

While growing blue catfish populations provide an attractive target for anglers in the region and a great option for an enjoyable family dinner, the Chesapeake Bay region would greatly benefit both economically and ecologically should a consistent and robust fishery be developed. The passage of HJ 1 and continued pressure on federal regulators is a vital next step in a positive path forward for all who rely on a healthy and balanced Chesapeake Bay ecosystem.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a favorable vote on HJ0001 .

For more information, please contact David Sikorski, Executive Director @ david@ccamd.org or (443)621-9186