



# CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

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*Environmental Protection and Restoration  
Environmental Education*

## **Senate Bill 455**

Chesapeake Bay and Coastal Sport Fishing License and Recreational Fishing – Pilot Program and Task Force

Date: March 1, 2022

Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Education, Health, & Environmental Affairs Committee

From: Allison Colden, Sr. Fisheries Scientist

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Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** SB 455 which would develop a pilot program for data collection under the Consolidated Chesapeake Bay and Coastal Boat Fishing License and stand up a Task Force to develop recommendations to improve recreational fisheries data by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

In a recent report on recreational fisheries data focused on Maryland's iconic striped bass fishery, DNR examined the weaknesses and gaps in existing recreational fisheries data collection programs and provided several recommendations for improvement. While MRIP, the coastwide federal recreational fisheries survey, provides accurate data at the coastwide and statewide level, as the Program's data is parsed into two-month "waves" and different fishery sectors, the reliability and accuracy diminish, adding significant uncertainty to management actions at the state level.

One area of significant uncertainty is angler effort – the number of anglers and how many trips each angler takes. Currently, the Consolidated Chesapeake Bay and Coastal Boat Fishing License ('boat license') allows a licensee to carry unlicensed anglers on their vessel. Unlicensed anglers fishing under this boat license are required to complete a free registration. DNR believes that there is a high level of non-compliance with the free registration, which would impact the accuracy of angler effort data. The proposed pilot program would address this suspected data gap by requiring licensees to report number of trips and number of fish caught and released or harvested for all anglers fishing under the boat license.

SB 455 would also create a task force of recreational fishing stakeholders, scientists, and DNR staff to develop recommendations for actions that will further improve recreational fisheries data and subsequent fisheries assessments, including actions that will increase DNR's reach to underrepresented and underserved communities. These recommendations will address key data gaps identified by DNR. SB 455 is a first step to improving accuracy and timeliness of information key to recreational fisheries management.

**CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on SB 455.** For more information, please contact Dr. Allison Colden, Maryland Senior Fisheries Scientist at [acolden@cbf.org](mailto:acolden@cbf.org) and 443.482.2160.

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*The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 300,000 members and e-subscribers, including over 109,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.*