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Caroline, Dorchester, Talbot,
and Wicomico Counties

Economic Matters Committee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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SPONSOR TESTIMONY
DELEGATE JOHNNY MAUTZ
DIST. 37B – CAROLINE, DORCHESTER, TALBOT & WICOMICO COUNTIES

HB 1217-NATURAL RESOURCES-OYSTER INSPECTION AND SEVERANCE TAXES-INCREASE

Summary

HB1217 increases the tax levied on each bushel of oysters shipped out of state. The current rate is .30 and if enacted, the new rate would be \$1. HB1217 also increases the tax levied on oysters harvested from Maryland public fishing areas, exclusive of the Potomac River, from \$1 to \$2 per bushel. All taxes collected shall be credited to the Fisheries Research and Development Fund and used only for the replenishment of the natural oyster bars of the State.

Background

Revenues from these taxes are necessary to fund oyster recruitment efforts throughout the Bay via Oyster Committees. Representatives from all of oyster committees have voted to request this increase.

Rationale

The cost of all aspects of growing and harvesting oysters has increased since these taxes were increased. The increase is necessary to ensure that support for investing in oyster recruitment is current with these increasing costs.

Amendment

Currently, Baltimore County does not report significant oyster harvests and is excluded in the original text of this legislation. Our oyster committees have voted to include Baltimore County in this legislation and a Sponsor Amendment has been prepared to add Baltimore County to this legislation. We request that you adopt this amendment.

Conclusion

We respectfully request a **favorable report of HB1217** from the Committee and thank you for considering this important legislation.