



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 9, 2022

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

HB 1242-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – MARYLAND WATERMEN’S MICROLOAN PROGRAM – ESTABLISHMENT

Summary

HB1242 establishes a new loan program within the Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBICO). The purpose of the program is to provide loans to qualified commercial operations in the State. These loans can be used for advancing a business such as purchasing boats, mechanical equipment, fishing gear, and other items used in commercial seafood harvesting.

This bill is a cross-file for SB826.

Background

Maryland’s watermen have been struggling and declining in recent years, and especially recently when the pandemic closed many restaurants and affected the market demand for seafood. As noted in RMC’s testimony, according to Salisbury University’s BEACON analysis, the state’s seafood industry contributes nearly \$600 million to the State’s economy.

Rationale

The seafood industry is a cornerstone of Maryland business. The price of running a commercial seafood business has increased, and the past few years have made it even more difficult to survive in the industry. This loans could lead to economic growth in the industry, and will support many local watermen as they grow their business.

Note

This loan is specifically designed for beginner watermen, defined as at least 2 years and not more than 10 years, and individuals that can demonstrate that at least 50% of their annual income was derived from commercial seafood harvesting.

Conclusion

We respectfully request a **favorable report of HB1242** from the Committee and thank you for considering this important legislation.