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I am the Conservation Director of the Maryland Bass Nation. This is a voluntary position that I have held for over 22 years. In my capacity as Conservation Director, I am responsible for working as a liaison with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to ensure mutual cooperation throughout the state in regards to the health and population of largemouth bass in our fishery. I have worked closely with the field personnel from the Fisheries Division performing electro-shock surveys, stocking of young bass, investigating fish kills, and other activities related to fishing.

Today I am asking for your support of HB 0696, DNR- Black Bass Conservation Fund, to add a voluntary checkoff box to the fishing license application and/or renewal. The purpose of this program is to allow fisherman (and fisherwomen) the opportunity to donate money for various programs designed to enhance bass fishing through education, expanding stocking projects, building artificial habitat structure, and other related activities.

I have personally spear-headed a bass stocking program, dubbed the "Upper Bay Bass Stocking Fund". Through the generosity of numerous fishing organizations, local businesses, and many individual contributors, we have been able to purchase hundreds of adult largemouth bass from a DNR approved vendor. We then distribute the bass throughout specific locations of Upper Bay rivers to ensure their viability, and enhance local bass populations. We recently received national recognition in "Bass Times", a widely circulated magazine throughout the United States and Canada.

This program has been proven to be extremely successful, based on catch rates, and testimonials that I have received from many avid fishermen. I can personally attest to the success of our efforts by the quality and numbers of bass that I have caught in the rivers that we have stocked.

I have also spear-headed habitat projects on the Potomac River, as well as the Choptank River on Maryland's Eastern Shore to enhance our beloved fishery.

In conclusion, it is my belief that if we can get this bill enacted, and the voluntary donation box becomes a reality, that we will receive much needed funding to expand our efforts throughout the entire state so that everyone in Maryland will experience a better time fishing for their favorite species of game fish!

Thank you,

Scott Sewell, Conservation Director, Maryland Bass Nation

President, M. R. Bass (Middle River Bass Anglers)

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