

Support for MD HB696.pdf

Uploaded by: Chris Horton

Position: FAV

February 22, 2023

Delegate Kumar P. Barve
Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee
251 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Delegate Dana Stein
Vice Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee
251 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Maryland HB 696

Position: Support

Dear Chair Barve and Vice Chair Stein:

The undersigned organizations, representing thousands of anglers in Maryland, and tens of thousands nationally, strongly support HB 696, a bill to establish a Black Bass Conservation Fund within the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR). This new, voluntary funding mechanism will not only benefit one of Maryland's most iconic sportfish species but could also serve as a model for other states for addressing specific fisheries conservation needs.

According to the 2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, nearly 9.6 million anglers spent 117 million days fishing for black bass (largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, spotted bass, etc.), indicating that black bass are the most sought after and valued freshwater sportfish species in the nation. Black bass are clearly a resource worth investing in, and HB 696 provides an avenue to generate additional resources for restoring and enhancing black bass populations in the state. Through habitat restoration efforts, supplemental stocking to increase or maintain population abundance, assistance with post-release survival following bass tournaments, and additional research opportunities, HB 696 provides an opportunity to address black bass conservation needs across the board.

Recruitment, retention and reactivation of anglers has been a major goal of state agencies across the nation. Through the American System of Conservation Funding, the more anglers we have, the more license dollars and excise taxes on fishing equipment that are available for fisheries conservation. High school bass fishing competitions are one of the fastest growing youth sports in the nation and are more inclusive for students regardless of athletic abilities, compared to traditional high school sports. The excitement and media coverage around high school and college bass fishing tournaments generates interest in fishing for kids and their parents, and providing for healthy bass fisheries and a rewarding fishing experience encourages families to take up fishing as a lifetime recreational hobby.

In closing, we urge the Committee to favorably report HB 696 and ensure the future of one of Maryland's most important fisheries.

Sincerely,

American Catfishing Association

American Sportfishing Association
Bass Anglers Sportsman Society
Coastal Conservation Association
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Major League Fishing
National Professional Anglers Association
The Bass Federation

HB696_CCAMD.pdf

Uploaded by: David Sikorski

Position: FAV



*Ensuring the health and conservation of our marine resources
and anglers' access to them*

February 24, 2023

To: Honorable members of the House Environment & Transportation Committee

**Re: House Bill 696 – Natural Resources – Black Bass Conservation Fund –
Establishment.**

CCA Maryland Position: Support

**Coastal Conservation Association(CCA) Maryland requests a FAVORABLE report on
House Bill 696.**

As Maryland's largest recreational fishing based membership organization, and a longtime participant in cooperative fisheries management, habitat enhancement and the promotion of fishing in Maryland, CCA Maryland supports the establishment of the voluntary donation program which this bill would create.

The Black Bass Conservation Fund would provide the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) the ability to process donations made by the public through their online fishing licensing system. The revenue raised through the new fund would be used for stocking black bass, enhancing aquatic habitat, supporting responsible bass tournaments, and supporting scientific research related to conservation of Maryland's black bass resource.

Per the DNR Black Bass Annual Review of 2022, nearly 230,000 licensed anglers classify themselves as Maryland bass anglers. As a widely distributed and popular fish species, black bass, which are more commonly called largemouth bass, currently support highly accessible recreational fisheries on public waterways in every jurisdiction of the state.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a FAVORABLE vote on HB 696. *For further discussion regarding this issue, please contact CCA Maryland Executive Director, David Sikorski – (443)621-9186 – david@ccamd.org*

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Uploaded by: Dr. Andrew Ralowicz

Position: FAV

HB 0696 SUPPORT

Dr. Andrew Ralowicz

Maryland Black Bass Advisory Committee
DR_RALOWICZ@yahoo.com 240 888 0087
225 Hutton Street Gaithersburg, MD 20877

HB 0696 SUPPORT

Natural Resources - Black Bass Conservation Fund - Establishment.

House of Delegates Committee on Environment and Transportation

Friday, February 24, 2023 at 1:00pm

Dear Chair Barve, Vice-Chair Stein and members of the Environment and Energy Committee,

As member of the Black Bass Advisory Committee to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MD DNR), and avid recreational bass angler, I thank Delegate Addison and fully support HB 0696.

The Black Bass Advisory Committee works to understand the status of Maryland's black bass (primarily largemouth and smallmouth bass) freshwater and tidal water populations, makes recommendations regarding fishery population management to MD DNR fishery managers, and reports to Maryland's Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission regarding these matters. Black Bass Advisory Committee members and their constituents represent the full range of bass black bass anglers, from tournament directors and anglers, to professional guides and recreational anglers.

The bill would establish a donation program for black bass management in Maryland, principally largemouth bass and smallmouth bass. The Black Bass Conservation Fund would provide MD DNR the legal method to process donations and use the funds for black bass management:

- to stock bass
- to enhance aquatic habitat
- to support responsible bass tournaments, and
- to support scientific research related to conservation of black bass resource.

This fund's donations would come voluntarily from sportsmen purchasing an angler's license or Chesapeake Bay Coastal Sports Fishing License in Maryland, thereby alleviating additional fiscal constrictions on MD DNR resources.

The MD DNR would seek the Black Bass Advisory Committee's input to prioritize the fund's use based on the current state of science and interests of Maryland's 200,000+ recreational bass anglers.

In closing, I strongly support the proposed legislation to establish the Black Bass Conservation Fund, and urge the committee to take favorable action on all matters related to HB 0696.

Respectfully submitted

Andrew E. Ralowicz, Ph.D.

Testimony Supporting HB0696 Submitted by Rich Bati

Uploaded by: Richard Batiuk

Position: FAV

HB 0696 SUPPORT

Rich Batiuk

Maryland Black Bass Advisory Committee

richbatiuk@gmail.com 410-507-0785

3123 Starboard Drive, Annapolis, Maryland 21403

HB 0696 SUPPORT

Black Bass Conservation Fund – Establishment

House of Delegates Committee on Environment and Energy

Friday, February 24, 2023 at 1:00 pm

Dear Chair Barve, Vice-Chair Stein and members of the Environment and Energy Committee,

As Vice Chair of the Black Bass Advisory Committee to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, I am fully supportive of HB 0696.

Reporting to Maryland’s Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission, the Black Bass Advisory Committee works to understand the status of Maryland’s freshwater and tidal water populations of black bass (primarily largemouth and smallmouth bass) and make recommendations regarding Statewide management of these fishery populations to the state fishery managers in the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. The Committee members represent the broad array of recreational fishers with an interest in black bass, from tournament directors to professional guides to recreational anglers.

The bill would establish a voluntary donation program for black bass management in Maryland, principally largemouth bass and smallmouth bass. The fund, Black Bass Conservation Fund, would provide the legal method for the Maryland Department Natural Resources to process donations made by citizens for use in black bass management. The revenue would be used for stocking bass, enhancing aquatic habitat, supporting responsible bass tournaments, and supporting scientific research related to conservation of the resource. The Department would seek input on the priorities for the use of the revenue from the Black Bass Advisory Committee, representing the interests of Maryland’s thousands of recreational bass anglers.

I urge a favorable report on HB 0696.

HB 0696 SUPPORT.pdf

Uploaded by: Roger Trageser

Position: FAV

HB 0696 SUPPORT

Natural Resources - Black Bass Conservation Fund - Establishment.

Friday, February 24, 2023 at 1:00pm

Dear Chair Barve, Vice-Chair Stein and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

I'd like to thank Delegate Addison for presenting and supporting HB 0696. I am a member of the Maryland Sport Fish Advisory Commission and Chairman of the Black Bass Advisory Committee.

The Black Bass Advisory Committee works with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to monitor the status of Maryland's black bass freshwater and tidal water populations, make recommendations regarding fishery population management to MD DNR fishery managers, and report to Maryland's Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission regarding these matters. Black Bass Advisory Committee members and their constituents represent the full range of black bass anglers, from the casual recreational angler to the serious tournament participant.

The bill would establish a donation program for black bass management in Maryland. The Black Bass Conservation Fund would provide MD DNR the legal method to process donations and use the funds for black bass management:

- to stock bass
- to enhance aquatic habitat
- to support responsible bass tournaments, and
- to support scientific research related to conservation of black bass resource.

This fund's donations would come voluntarily from sportsmen purchasing an angler's license or Chesapeake Bay Coastal Sports Fishing License in Maryland.

The MD DNR would seek the Black Bass Advisory Committee's input to prioritize the fund's use based on the current state of science and interests of Maryland's 200,000+ recreational bass anglers.

In closing, I strongly support the proposed legislation to establish the Black Bass Conservation Fund and urge the committee to take favorable action on all matters related to HB 0696.

Roger Trageser

HB0696_DNR_SWA_E&T_2-24-23.pdf

Uploaded by: Sarah Widman

Position: FWA



Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Josh Kurtz, Acting Secretary
Allan Fisher, Deputy Secretary

February 24, 2023

BILL NUMBER: House Bill 696 – First Reader

SHORT TITLE: Natural Resources - Black Bass Conservation Fund - Establishment

DEPARTMENT’S POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT’S POSITION

The Department supports House Bill 696 with amendments. The revenue would be used for stocking black bass, enhancing habitat, supporting conservation during black bass tournaments, and supporting scientific research related to conservation of the resource. Black bass is a generic term that references largemouth bass and smallmouth bass in Maryland as well as other freshwater bass species in North America (but *not* striped bass or black sea bass).

Current stocking projects support the highest quality fisheries but do not produce enough black bass to grow or develop lesser fisheries in Maryland’s portion of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Stocking may not always be useful for growing a fishery. Habitat enhancement projects like mini reef balls and freshwater reef development can help aggregate existing fish and offer more enjoyable fishing experiences for anglers. Other habitat enhancement projects may include reducing trash accumulation, placement of large woody debris, or planting riparian buffers along stream edges.

The Department currently permits and promotes hundreds of black bass tournaments in Maryland waters. The department has worked even harder to support conservation-minded catch-and-release practices during black bass tournaments. Each year, the department has awarded support for supplies for better handling practices during youth-oriented fishing tournaments. These funds remain extremely limited, contingent on available funding, and thus would greatly benefit from an alternative source of revenue.

Finally, money may also be used to support scientific research related to conservation of the resource. The department has developed an interjurisdictional plan to monitor abundance of black bass on the Potomac River with biologists from Maryland, Washington D.C., Virginia, and the Potomac River Fisheries Commission. This long-term monitoring project relies on anglers reporting tagged bass.

The Department suggests two technical amendments. The Black Bass Conservation Fund should be added to the list of exempted funds under State Finance and Procurement Article, Section 6-226 as no interest from the fund shall be accrued to the General Fund of the State. This makes it consistent with other special funds for state fisheries.

Contact: Emily Wilson, Director, Legislative and Constituent Services (Acting)
emilyh.wilson@maryland.gov ♦ 410-260-8426 (office) ♦ 443-223-1176 (cell)

The Department also suggests that text be added to ensure the State Treasurer invests the money of the fund in the same manner as other state money may be invested and any interest earnings of the fund shall be credited to the fund. This text is also consistent with existing text in other statutes relating to fisheries funds.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The concept of the fund was recommended by the Department's Black Bass Advisory Committee (BBAC) during its meetings over the past two years.

BILL EXPLANATION

The bill would establish a voluntary donation program for black bass management. The fund, Black Bass Conservation Fund, would provide the legal method for the department to process donations made by citizens for use in black bass management.

BY:

(To be offered in the Environment and Transportation Committee)

AMENDMENTS TO HOUSE BILL 696
(First Reading File Bill)

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 1, in line 6, after “Fund;” insert “requiring interest of the Fund to be credited to the Fund”; and after line 16 insert:

“By repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

Article – State Finance and Procurement

Section 6-226(a)(2)(ii)170. and 171.

Annotated Code of Maryland Department

(2021 Replacement Volume and 2022 Supplement)

By adding to

Article – State Finance and Procurement

Section 6-226(a)(2)(ii)172.

Annotated Code of Maryland Department

(2021 Replacement Volume and 2022 Supplement)”.

AMENDMENT NO. 2

On page 4, at line 1, strike “two” and substitute “**THREE**”; after line 21, insert:

“(3) INTEREST EARNINGS”;

in line 23, strike “(3)” and substitute “**(4)**”; after line 24, insert:

“(G) (1) THE STATE TREASURER SHALL INVEST THE MONEY OF THE FUND IN THE SAME MANNER AS OTHER STATE MONEY MAY BE INVESTED.

(2) ANY INTEREST EARNINGS OF THE FUND SHALL BE CREDITED TO THE FUND.”;

and in line 25, strike “(G)” and substitute “**(H)**”.

AMENDMENT NO. 3

On page 5, after line 2, insert:

“Article – State Finance and Procurement

6–226.

(a) (2) (ii) The provisions of subparagraph (i) of this paragraph do not apply to the following funds:

170. the Cannabis Public Health Fund; [and]

171. the Community Reinvestment and Repair Fund; AND

172. THE BLACK BASS CONSERVATION FUND”.