



Susan O'Neill, Chair

Charlotte Davis, Executive Director

March 3, 2023

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
Chairman, House Environment and Transportation Committee
Taylor House Office Bldg., Room 251
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: LETTER OF INFORMATION
House Bill 1083 – Food System Resiliency Council – Invasive Species Coalition - Establishment

Dear Chairman Barve:

The Rural Maryland Council submits this letter of information for House Bill 1083 – Food System Resiliency Council – Invasive Species Coalition – Establishment which was heard in the House Environment and Transportation Committee on March 3, 2023.

The Rural Maryland Council supports the work of the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council which was created in 2021 (HB831/SB723 of 2021) and the Office of Resilience created in 2022 (HB706/SB630 of 2022). These entities work to alleviate food insecurity in the State to make sure everyone in our State has access to healthy produce and protein. Due to the importance of the Food System Resiliency Council, the Council's work should be made a permanent body within the Maryland Department of Emergency Management and not just extended five years as designated under HB1083. The Council previously supported earlier this Session House Bill 32 – Maryland Food System Resiliency Council which was heard before the Committee on February 1, 2023.

However, we support creation of the Invasive Species Coalition contained in HB1083. As you know, the Chesapeake Bay is under threat due to an invasive fish species known as the blue catfish (*Ictalurus furcatus*). According to www.chesapeakebay.net this species has the potential to cause substantial harm to the Chesapeake Bay food web as it has a long lifespan and an expansive diet, which can include many native species that call the Bay their home such as menhaden and blue crabs. In August 2020, the Chesapeake Bay Program developed the Invasive Catfish Management Strategy that included a commercial fishery and marketing strategy to increase consumer awareness and market demand of wild-caught blue catfish from the Bay. A coalition as laid out in HB1083 will help support the efforts to include this invasive species in our food supply while also monitoring and eradicating it from the Bay.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 1083.

Sincerely,

Charlotte Davis
Executive Director

Cc. Delegates Jacobs, Adams, and Arentz