

HB1262 Bill Testimony

UNFAVORABLE

HB1262 undermines any progress that has been made by the Oyster Advisory Commission and the consensus process. This consensus process has to be representative of 60% industry and 40% other stakeholders.

This bill also removes the Oyster Recovery Partnership, a non-profit organization that is heavily involved in oyster restoration and other oyster related issues. Their input is invaluable.

There are plenty of places to lease bottom right now. Pre-approval has already been tried in the Patuxent with Aquaculture Enterprise Zones. This topic of pre-approval leasing should be discussed among the current Oyster Advisory Commission members using the 60/40 consensus process.

Another concern is that most of the state owned lands are on the Middle and Lower Eastern Shore and are heavily used by clambers, crabbers, and recreational boaters.

In addition, the bill does not address the problem of long lease procurements. This could be solved by hiring much needed personnel in the Aquaculture Department of the DNR.

And, most important, the main problem still has not been addressed: the shell shortage issue. Even if you pre-approve leases, there still is not enough shell to help get these leases started.

For all these reasons, I ask for an unfavorable vote on this bill.

Herman Jeffery Harrison
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