

Brian Russell, President
Southern Maryland Shellfish Growers Association
45725 Stoney Run Drive
Great Mills, MD 20634

March 13, 2023

To: Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee

Re: HB1262 Aquaculture - Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission, Oyster Advisory Commission, and Leases
SMSGA Position: Supports HB 1262

Dear Chairman Barve, Vice chair Stein, and members of the committee,

My name is Brian Russell, one of the four owners and operators of Shore Thing Shellfish, a small oyster farm in Tall Timbers, and the President of the Southern Maryland Growers Association. We are in favor of Delegate Clark's bill HB1262 Aquaculture - Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission, Oyster Advisory Commission, and Leases.

In 2009 the State of Maryland streamlined the oyster aquaculture industry leasing process to encourage folks to get into aquaculture and thereby get more oysters into the Chesapeake Bay. In 2010 my company, Shore Thing Shellfish LLC applied for two water column leases. The first lease was issued **without any protest in just over 24 months!** The second lease had a conflict with a poundnet site and so had to be revised in which it ended up taking three years to finally be issued. Now in 2023, thirteen years after legislation streamlined the process, and it is still taking three years on average to issue a lease with out protest. As an industry we find it hard to move forward with a bogged down leasing system like this and so HB1262 will help to speed up this process. HB1262 also looks to add aquaculture representation on the Oyster Advisory Committee and, Tidal Fish Advisory Committee. We hope that this representation would help to alleviate user conflicts with lease areas before leases are applied for.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and we ask that you give HB1262 a favorable report.

Sincerely,



Brian Russell