

HB 0696 SUPPORT

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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.