



Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

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March 14, 2023

To: House Environment & Transportation Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

Re: **Support of HB 1262 - Aquaculture - Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission, Oyster Advisory Commission, and Leases**

On behalf of our Farm Bureau member families in Maryland, I submit this written testimony in support of HB 1262, legislation that would 1) alter the membership of the Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission and Oyster Advisory Commission to add 2 additional aquaculture industry members on each, 2) require that DNR process a lease application that has received no protests against it within 6 months, and 3) require DNR to work with other relevant state agencies to identify state-owned properties adjacent to which aquaculture leasing could be appropriate. The goal is to streamline the leasing process and ensure the aquaculture industry has sufficient representation to cover their varied industry and interests on relevant advisory boards.

Easily one of the largest roadblocks to more oyster aquaculture farmers getting into the industry is the never-ending lease application process. Most lease applications take years to complete. This bill seeks to expedite those leases that aren't protested and get them into production. Also, finding good locations to lease that don't have adjacent landowners is difficult. Mapping those areas adjacent to state-owned properties will assist growers in their search for new area to lease.

MDFB Policy: We recommend that greater attention and research be given to what is happening in the water column of the Bay itself. The filter feeders and small aquatic life will have to be a part of the long-term solution for the Bay cleanup.

We support the Maryland Aquaculture Coordinating Council's recommendations that provide science-based guidance on how aquaculture should be managed.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS HB 1262 & REQUESTS A FAVORABLE REPORT

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colby Ferguson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Colby Ferguson
Director of Government Relations

For more information contact Colby Ferguson at (240) 578-0396