

**HB 0696 SUPPORT**

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**Black Bass Conservation Fund – Establishment**

House of Delegates Committee on Environment and Energy

Friday, February 24, 2023 at 1:00 pm

Dear Chair Barve, Vice-Chair Stein and members of the Environment and Energy Committee,

As Vice Chair of the Black Bass Advisory Committee to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, I am fully supportive of HB 0696.

Reporting to Maryland’s Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission, the Black Bass Advisory Committee works to understand the status of Maryland’s freshwater and tidal water populations of black bass (primarily largemouth and smallmouth bass) and make recommendations regarding Statewide management of these fishery populations to the state fishery managers in the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. The Committee members represent the broad array of recreational fishers with an interest in black bass, from tournament directors to professional guides to recreational anglers.

The bill would establish a voluntary donation program for black bass management in Maryland, principally largemouth bass and smallmouth bass. The fund, Black Bass Conservation Fund, would provide the legal method for the Maryland Department Natural Resources to process donations made by citizens for use in black bass management. The revenue would be used for stocking bass, enhancing aquatic habitat, supporting responsible bass tournaments, and supporting scientific research related to conservation of the resource. The Department would seek input on the priorities for the use of the revenue from the Black Bass Advisory Committee, representing the interests of Maryland’s thousands of recreational bass anglers.

I urge a favorable report on HB 0696.