



CHESAPEAKE
CULINARY CENTER
Locally Grown

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March 1, 2023

To: Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chair
Honorable Dana Stein, Vice Chair
Honorable Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

Re: **House Bill 1083** Invasive Species Coalition

CCC Position: **Support**

The Chesapeake Culinary Center (CCC) is a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit that is a grassroots organization our mission is to create economically stable families through job creation and training, food security, and to drive our local economy by keeping our farmers farming, and now our watermen fishing. We seek to help all members of the community, including those most vulnerable to economic and health-related challenges, build relationships and prosper through food-centered programs. We see food as a uniting force. Regardless of one's socioeconomic status, race, or gender, all people need food to survive. Food-centered programs instantly provide common ground. They provide a context that is relatable for all people, creating a platform for teaching important life skills.

We need a sense of urgency for this issue. I would like to highlight the danger the invasive species pose (in particular the blue catfish) and the opportunity, we have to address hunger at the same time as saving our natural resources, and the urgency of both. The awareness of the issue has been on the radar of the state for a number of years and a comprehensive report was conducted by the Invasive Catfish Workgroup under the Chesapeake Bay Program but there does not seem to be a "Quarter Back" to pull all the information together to put in place the and groups together to move the harvesting of the fish to the scale that is needed to keep the blue cats from destroying the bay and the seafood industry as we know it. We need timely results now. After speaking with MDEM I realize MDEM/FSRC might not be the right place for the Coalition and would be open to considering other locations in state government or even the Governor's Office as long as the job gets done.

By addressing this issue and creating a market demand, it will allow our watermen to diversify their catch and help to reduce the number of invasives in our tributaries that are causing havoc on the ecosystem. This bill will assist in moving toward a more food resilient Maryland. During the pandemic our food pantries were short on protein-based foods. We have this delicious sustainable fish in our water that could be used to fill that void and work towards food security and equity in our state. Not to mention the large fish that can get up to 100#s and have been deemed too high in containments for consumption is a very good source for fertilizer which is lacking in our farming community at this time. There are so many wins to concentrating on harvesting one of the most sustainable fish in America.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a **FAVORABLE** report for HB 1083

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