



Chesapeake  
**OYSTER ALLIANCE**  
*10 Billion for the Bay*

ADVOCATES FOR HERRING BAY - ANNAPOLIS AQUACULTURE - ARUNDEL RIVERS FEDERATION  
BLUE OYSTER ENVIRONMENTAL - CAPE CONSERVATION CORPS - CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION  
CHESAPEAKE BEACH OYSTER CULTIVATION SOCIETY - COASTAL CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION MARYLAND  
DOWNTOWN SAILING CENTER - FRIENDS OF ST. CLEMENTS BAY - HOOPERS ISLAND OYSTER CO.  
LIVING CLASSROOMS FOUNDATION - MARK STREET VENTURES, LLC - NATIONAL AQUARIUM  
ORCHARD POINT OYSTER COMPANY - PIRATES COVE OYSTER COMPANY - SEVERN RIVER ASSOCIATION – SHORERIVERS  
SOLAR OYSTERS LLC - ST. MARY'S RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION  
TRUE CHESAPEAKE OYSTER COMPANY, LLC - WATERFRONT PARTNERSHIP OF BALTIMORE

**Senate Bill 434**

Natural Resources – Restorative Aquaculture Pilot Program

DATE: March 2, 2023

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Chesapeake Oyster Alliance is a broad coalition of non-profits, community organizations, oyster growers, academic institutions, and business owners with the shared goal of adding 10 billion oysters in the Bay by the year 2025. With a focus on expanding aquaculture, increased oyster restoration, and science-based fishery management, the Chesapeake Oyster Alliance aims to accelerate oyster recovery efforts and in so doing the recovery of the Chesapeake Bay.

Oyster aquaculture, as known as oyster farming, is the practice of cultivating oysters on areas leased from the State for harvest. Since 2010, Maryland oyster aquaculture harvest has grown, on average, 24% annually. The industry provides valuable economic benefits and employment opportunities in Maryland's coastal communities.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, oysters planted by oyster farmers provide water filtration, habitat, and a low-carbon source of nutritious seafood to local markets. In 2016, oyster aquaculture was approved by the Chesapeake Bay Program as a nutrient reduction 'best management practice'<sup>2</sup> allowing municipalities to partner with oyster farmers to help reach their Bay clean-up goals.<sup>3</sup>

**The Chesapeake Oyster Alliance strongly supports Senate Bill 434 and recommends a favorable report from the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee.**

**SB434** creates a pilot program to provide financial incentives for businesses that manage their aquaculture leases to maximize environmental value. Under this program, leases would be maintained to meet or exceed criteria used in oyster restoration. Incentivizing these aquaculture approaches creates opportunities for partnership with the private sector to support oyster recovery and provides aquaculture businesses with additional revenue streams, making the industry more resilient to unexpected changes in market demand.

<sup>1</sup> van Senten, Jonathan et al. 2020. Analysis of the Economic Benefits of the Maryland Shellfish Aquaculture Industry. Final Report to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. Available [online](#).

<sup>2</sup> Oyster BMP Expert Panel Report. 2016. Available [online](#).

<sup>3</sup> Wheeler, Tim. 2023. Oyster farming co-op earns money from Maryland county to help reduce pollution. Bay Journal. 23 January 2023. Available [online](#).

Oyster aquaculture is a key component of long-term oyster recovery in Chesapeake Bay. This bill will help ensure the viability and productivity of Maryland's nascent oyster industry, helping to reduce the seafood trade deficit, create jobs in working waterfront communities, and provide Marylanders with fresh, locally produced seafood.

For these reasons, the Chesapeake Oyster Alliance urges a **favorable** report on Senate Bill 434 from the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee. Please contact Tanner Council ([tcouncil@cbf.org](mailto:tcouncil@cbf.org)) with any questions.