



Wes Moore, Governor  
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor  
Josh Kurtz, Secretary  
David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary

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March 29, 2023

**BILL NUMBER: Senate Bill 434 – Third Reader**

**SHORT TITLE: Natural Resources – Restorative Aquaculture Pilot Program**

**DEPARTMENT’S POSITION: OPPOSE**

**EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT’S POSITION:**

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The Department opposes Senate Bill 434.

The bill would set up a pilot program for a new concept that has not yet been adequately vetted among the proper stakeholders. The Department believes that it would be most productive to have discussions with stakeholders first prior to deciding to create a pilot program. Because of this, the Department still believes the best path forward would be to have discussions about the concept of a restorative aquaculture pilot program, including concepts for a pilot program that would be created with the metrics and criteria determined by those discussions. The Department believes that allowing time for productive discussions with appropriate involvement and consultation will result in both good dialogue on this concept as well as assisting in creating the best possible outcome for a restorative aquaculture pilot program. The Department would need both staff and funding in order to meet the requirements of the bill. Without funding for the required incentives, and not knowing what the amount of those incentives would be, the Department would be creating a pilot program that may result in a program where only a few participants could participate because of limited funding availability. This would impact any results of the pilot program, potentially making it unsuccessful.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

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None.

**BILL EXPLANATION:**

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The bill would create an aquaculture pilot program that focuses on restoration activities. The bill would require the agency to design the program to provide financial incentives to participants based on a per-acre payment requirement, and for oysters purchased by the Department for sanctuary plantings.

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