



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

ANNAPOLIS AQUACULTURE - 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 437**

Aquaculture - Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission, Oyster Advisory Commission, and Leases

DATE: March 2, 2023

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

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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 437 and recommends a favorable report from the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee.**

**SB437** implements key regulatory reforms to help grow Maryland's aquaculture industry, including addressing lengthy lease processing timelines, lease protest procedures, and ensuring right-sized representation on advisory commissions. It would also expand opportunities for aquaculture adjacent to state-owned lands, where appropriate.

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<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 437 from the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee. Please contact Tanner Council ([tcouncil@cbf.org](mailto:tcouncil@cbf.org)) with any questions.