



Chesapeake
OYSTER ALLIANCE
10 Billion for the Bay

ANNAPOLIS AQUACULTURE – CAPE CONSERVATION CORPS – CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION
CHESAPEAKE BEACH OYSTER CULTIVATION SOCIETY – COASTAL CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION MARYLAND
DOWNTOWN SAILING CENTER – LIVING CLASSROOMS FOUNDATION – MARINE SCIENCE FOUNDATION
ORCHARD POINT OYSTER CO. – PIRATES COVE OYSTER COMPANY – SHORERIVERS
ST. MARY'S RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION – WATERFRONT PARTNERSHIP OF BALTIMORE
ADVOCATES FOR HERRING BAY – SOLAR OYSTERS, LLC

Senate Bill 433

Economic Development – Woman- and Minority-Owned Shellfish Aquaculture Enterprise Fund

DATE: February 21, 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.¹ 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'² allowing municipalities to partner with oyster farmers to help reach their Bay clean-up goals.³

The Chesapeake Oyster Alliance strongly supports Senate Bill 433 and recommends a favorable report from the Senate Finance Committee.

SB433 establishes an aquaculture business enterprise fund to provide loans of up to \$50,000 to new women- and minority-owned aquaculture businesses for equipment, infrastructure, and training to start or expand their oyster production. This fund works alongside existing loan programs to create new opportunities for traditionally underrepresented business owners to succeed this growing industry.

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 locally produced seafood. For these reasons, the Chesapeake Oyster Alliance urges a **favorable** report on Senate Bill 433 from the Senate Finance Committee. Please contact Tanner Council (tcouncil@cbf.org) with any questions.

¹ van Senten, Jonathan et al. 2020. Analysis of the Economic Benefits of the Maryland Shellfish Aquaculture Industry. Available [online](#).

² Oyster BMP Expert Panel Report. 2016. Available [online](#).

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