



*Ensuring the health and conservation of our marine resources
and anglers' access to them*

February 15, 2023

To: House Health & Government Operations Committee

Re: House Bill 63 – Certified Local Farm and Chesapeake Invasive Species Provider Program- Establishment

CCA Maryland Position: SUPPORT

Coastal Conservation Association(CCA) Maryland requests a FAVORABLE report on House Bill 63.

This bill alters the Certified Local Farm Enterprise Program to create the Certified Local Farm and Chesapeake Invasive Species Provider Program, allowing invasive blue catfish and flathead catfish to count towards the current 20% local procurement goal which exists in some contracts.

As invasive species, blue and flathead catfish have an outsized impact on the native and natural ecosystems of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. While both species have been established in the Bay for a number of decades, the record periods of rain recorded in 2018-2019 allowed blue catfish spread throughout Maryland's portion of the Chesapeake Bay, providing the species more access to suitable feeding and spawning areas than ever before.

As a top predator, blue catfish have a diverse diet which includes algae, shellfish and finfish, meaning that they eat important native species, and outcompete other predatory species for limited food sources, further upsetting the balance of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. Flathead catfish are more limited in range due to their habitat needs, but also present a threat to native species the riverine areas they inhabit.

Given the broad range of blue catfish throughout Maryland waters, these fish are a readily available target for commercial harvesters providing a nearly inexhaustible source of protein for existing or new markets and procurement programs.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a FAVORABLE vote on HB 63.

For further discussion regarding this issue, please contact CCA Maryland Executive Director, David Sikorski – (443)621-9186 – david@ccamd.org