



Testimony in SUPPORT of HB63 – Certified Local Farm and Chesapeake Invasive Species Provider Program - Establishment

February 15, 2023

Dear Chairwoman Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT of HB63** on behalf of ShoreRivers. ShoreRivers is a river protection group on Maryland's Eastern Shore with over 2,000 members. Our mission is to protect and restore our Eastern Shore waterways through science-based advocacy, restoration, and education.

This bill will change the Certified Local Farmer Enterprise Program to be the Certified Local Farm and Chesapeake Invasive Species Provider Program. By including invasive species providers in this program, it will incentivize the catching and usage of invasive species like blue catfish and snakehead, which are wreaking ecological and economic devastation on our Chesapeake ecosystem. These invasive species threaten native fish populations because they are so aggressive, adapt to a variety of water conditions, and can outcompete native fish for food and resources. They have proliferated throughout the Bay watershed, and while recreational fishermen are catching some of them, it is really our commercial watermen who are making the largest impact at reducing the populations of these invasive species.

This bill has a very low fiscal note because state agencies including the Department of Agriculture are already working on this program for local farm produce, so adding invasive species to this program will have minimal impact on programmatic expenses. It will also provide a benefit to local businesses as the demand for these delicious invasive species increases. The more than these harmful fish species can be removed from our local waterways, the healthier our aquatic ecosystems will be. Adding invasive species to the procurement requirements for state agencies also shows Maryland's commitment to improving the health of Chesapeake Bay and supporting the local community that depend on clean water and thriving native ecosystems.

For these reasons stated above, ShoreRivers urges the Committee to adopt a **FAVORABLE** report on HB63.

Sincerely,

Zack Kelleher,
Sassafras Riverkeeper, on behalf of:

ShoreRivers

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