



Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

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March 29, 2023

To: House Environment & Transportation Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

Re: **Support of SB 434 - Natural Resources - Restorative Aquaculture Pilot Program**

On behalf of our Farm Bureau member families in Maryland, I submit this written testimony in support of SB 434, legislation that would require DNR to establish a pilot program, in consultation with the Aquaculture Coordinating Council and UMCES, to provide incentive payments for aquaculture farmers who maintain conditions on their lease that provide similar ecosystem benefits as restored reef areas. This program would sunset after 6 years. This would provide alternative revenue stream for oyster farmers who choose to manage their farms to the standards developed by DNR.

Cleaning up the bay requires more than just trying to reduce the pollution entering it. Filtering out the nitrogen and other sediment is critical to truly cleaning up the water body. Oyster aquaculture is one of the best ways to do that. This pilot program will work to restore the ecosystem while still allowing the grower to be profitable.

MDFB Policy: We recommend that greater attention and research be given to what is happening in the water column of the Bay itself. The filter feeders and small aquatic life will have to be a part of the long-term solution for the Bay cleanup.

We support the Maryland Aquaculture Coordinating Council's recommendations that provide science-based guidance on how aquaculture should be managed.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS SB 434 & REQUESTS A FAVORABLE REPORT

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colby Ferguson". The signature is stylized and includes a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Colby Ferguson
Director of Government Relations

For more information contact Colby Ferguson at (240) 578-0396