



**Testimony of
Chesapeake Region Accessible Boating (CRAB)
Before the Maryland Senate
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
February 22, 2024**

Dear Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee, I am Paul Bollinger, President & CEO of Chesapeake Region Accessible Boating (CRAB) and I have been honored to serve in this position since 2016. CRAB has provided sailing instruction and boating for people with disabilities and recovering warriors for 33 years on Chesapeake Bay.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify today in support of Senate Bill 0597, Individuals with Disabilities and Service-Disabled Veterans Boating Fund. The importance of this Bill and what it will mean to thousands of people with disabilities and disabled veterans cannot be overstated. CRAB has hosted tens of thousands of Marylanders and warriors for over 3 decades. We can speak first-hand about the life changing experience that sailing on the Bay can mean to people who never thought they would have the opportunity to be on a boat and learn to sail.

Not too long ago, one of our guests arrived in a wheelchair to go sailing with CRAB on a picture-perfect day. Sailing near the Bay Bridge, he turned to the volunteer skipper onboard and said, "I want to thank you for taking me the farthest I have ever been from my wheelchair and the memories that put me in it." This guest shared his feelings and opened our eyes and hearts to the freedom and thrill of sailing can have on a person's well-being.

CRAB provides sailing and boating at no-charge to over 1,200 guests every year. We expect to increase this number by 30% this year while operating from newly opened Annapolis Adaptive Boating Center. In addition, we will be adding Remote-Controlled Sailboat Racing for guests who don't want to leave the dock; and, fishing from the new Gemini power catamaran for the more adventurous recovering warriors who prefer fishing over sailing.

We also are very pleased to announce that CRAB will be teamed with the US Naval Academy Sailing Team to host the Recovering Warrior Sailing Regatta in September. This event brings together the next generation of military leaders and recovering warriors who have given more than most in the defense of our country for a wonderful day of competitive sailing, lunch, and awards ceremony.

CRAB is grateful to have the opportunity to testify in support of SB 0597 and we appreciate your support for its passage.