

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen of the committee. My name is James Ronayne and I'm a Senior at Annapolis High School. I am an avid sailor, waterman, and photographer on the bay. I am here today in protest of Senate Bill 317.

As a Photographer on the Bay, my favorite thing to do is take pictures of the hard-working watermen who devote their lives to the water. Through my journey as a photographer on the bay, I have met and taken pictures of almost every waterman on the east side of the Chesapeake from the Magothy down to Deale. Through my literal lens, I have grown a great appreciation for the work of a waterman. These folks are doing dark-to-dark work. They begin their day before the sun rises and finish it after the sun has set. This is back-breaking, hard manual labor that repeats every day, no matter the conditions. Many of them work year-round changing fisheries as the seasons rotate. I have had the great privilege of being able to document this display of hard work and heritage over the past few seasons of Crabbing, Oystering, and Fishing. I have established relationships with these watermen and a few of them even have my photos hanging on the walls of their homes. Most watermen are good, honest, hardworking people who just want to utilize their part of the fishery. Unfortunately, there are a few poachers who abuse the fishery. They Poach from protected areas or keep undersized species. These Poachers are actively destroying the ecology of the Chesapeake and tarnishing the name of honest watermen.

These Poachers have an obvious leg up on the honest watermen. They go to untouched fishing grounds and keep more fish/crabs/oysters. It is not fair that the folks who follow the rules should be at a disadvantage to those who Cheat.

Senate Bill 317 would prohibit MD DNR from Revoking a Poacher's authorization to harvest species in the Bay, Allowing illegal fishing to only be put on pause rather than stopped. This action for DNR is a safeguard against unlawful fishing practices in the Bay. Watermen are good at what they do. There is no "Accidental" lawbreaking. No boats are "drifting" into sanctuaries and harvesting oysters. Being able to harvest is a Privilege, not a Right.

I urge the Committee to protect the integrity of these hard-working watermen and I am respectfully requesting an Unfavorable report on Senate Bill 317.