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## THE SENATE OF MARYLAND ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

### Testimony in Support of SB1028 - Natural Resources – Vessels – Carbon Monoxide Warning Labels

**Mr. Chair, Madame Vice Chair, and members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:**

SB1028 requires gasoline-powered vessels in Maryland waters to display carbon monoxide (CO) warning labels on both the transom and helm. This bill honors Matthew McHale, a young constituent from District 33 who tragically lost his life in 2016 due to CO poisoning on a boat.

Maryland's waterways define our state, from the rivers of Western Maryland to the Chesapeake Bay and our Atlantic coastline. They are central to our recreation, economy, and way of life. But ensuring safety on the water is just as important as enjoying its benefits.

#### **The Danger of Carbon Monoxide on Boats**

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless, and tasteless gas produced when carbon-based fuels, such as gasoline, burn. On boats, CO can accumulate in enclosed areas, near blocked exhaust outlets, or even in open spaces due to the "station wagon effect"—where exhaust gases are pulled back into a vessel. It can also drift from nearby boats or docks, creating invisible dangers.

CO poisoning symptoms—headache, dizziness, nausea, and weakness—are often mistaken for seasickness or intoxication, leading to delays in seeking medical attention. Tragically, exposure can be fatal even in small doses over time or in a single high-concentration incident.

Each year, over 400 Americans die from unintentional CO poisoning, more than 100,000 visit emergency rooms, and over 14,000 are hospitalized. CO exposure is as much a risk on water as it is on land, yet awareness of boating-related CO poisoning remains low.

#### **Why This Bill Matters**

Maryland is home to one of the nation's most active boating communities, and we have a responsibility to protect those who enjoy and rely on our waters. Other states, including Minnesota and Oklahoma, have enacted similar laws—Sophia's Law and Andy's Law—requiring CO warning labels on boats. These measures have raised awareness and saved lives.

SB1028 was developed with input from key stakeholders, including the Department of Natural Resources, the American Boat & Yacht Council (ABYC), and members of Maryland’s boating industry. ABYC, headquartered in Annapolis—the “Sailing Capital of the World”—is a national leader in boating safety standards. Maryland is well-positioned to build on the success of other states in protecting boaters from CO dangers.

To ensure a targeted and practical approach, I have requested two sponsor amendments:

1. Clarifying that the labeling requirement applies only to vessels manufactured after July 31, 2007.
2. Naming this bill **Matthew’s Law** in honor of Matthew McHale.

### **Conclusion**

This bill takes a simple but critical step in preventing carbon monoxide poisoning on boats. As an addition to the existing State Boat Act, it aligns with Maryland’s commitment to water safety and education—without requiring additional state resources, as noted in the Fiscal Note.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a **favorable report on SB1028**.