

## **SB837 Oyster Restoration - Use of Federal Funds - Prohibition**

*Education, Energy, and Environment Committee*

Chair: Senator Brian Feldman; Vice-Chair: Senator Cheryl Kagan

### Testimony from

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Chair Feldman and members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee thank you for allowing me to provide this testimony in opposition to SB837 on behalf of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES).

Since its founding in 1925, UMCES has been leading the way toward better management of Maryland's natural resources and the protection and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay. It's often referred to as "the institution of the environment for the state of Maryland."

This bill seeks to prohibit the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) from using federal funds for "oyster restoration" from July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2030, with the exclusion of five sanctuaries in Maryland waters.

The UMCES oyster hatchery is located at its Horn Point Laboratory in Cambridge, MD. The oyster hatchery produces billions of oyster larvae and hundreds of millions of spat-on-shell for restoration purposes such as oyster sanctuaries, public bars, and aquaculture ventures. Currently the majority of funding UMCES receives from the Department of Natural Resources to support sanctuaries are through a grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Should this bill pass, funding UMCES for the production of oyster larvae and spat-on-shell would be in jeopardy for additional oyster sanctuary development not listed in the bill.

This bill may also preclude UMCES partnering with DNR on other oyster-related projects funded by the federal government that directly and indirectly include restoration such as assessing public bars, enhancing coastal resilience through green infrastructure, ecological programs, genetic assessments, and disease mitigation and prevention, among others.

Finally, not only will this bill disrupt oyster production it would also reduce the number of fulltime jobs for well-trained, highly skilled UMCES employees located in Cambridge. Additionally, it would significantly impact the summer student programs we have that target undergraduates interested in coastal sciences and aquaculture. After this bill expires it would take years to rebuild the staff capacity, expertise, and programs that currently run at the hatchery.

**UMCES opposes SB837 and seeks the Committee's unfavorable report.**