

**DANA JONES**  
*Legislative District 30A*  
Anne Arundel County

Appropriations Committee

*Subcommittees*

Vice Chair, Health and Social Services

Oversight Committee on Pensions

Joint Committee on Administrative,  
Executive, and Legislative Review

Anne Arundel County Delegation

President, Women Legislators of Maryland



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**THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES**  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Delegate Dana Jones**  
**Before the Environment and Transportation Committee**

**In Support of HB 397**  
**Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation - Oyster**  
**Shucking House Loan Program**  
**February 12th 2025, 1:00 pm**

Chair Korman, Vice-Chair Boyce, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

I come before you today to introduce House Bill 397, MARBIDCO Oyster Shucking House Loan Program. Established in 2022 as part of House Bill 1228, The Maryland Oyster Shucking House Loan Program was established to help finance the cost of eligible seafood processing projects, including historic oyster shucking facilities, and to facilitate an increase in the amount of oyster shells retained in the State and returned to the Chesapeake Bay (as oyster spat or oyster habitat).

Unfortunately, despite the sizable number of general inquiries that MARBIDCO has received over the last two-plus years concerning this program, only one applicant has successfully applied to this program thus far. This bill makes two changes to the program that are aimed at increasing the usability of previously appropriated funds to support Maryland's Oyster industry and the health of the Bay.

The first change would allow MARBIDCO to make loans up to \$25,000 for each full time and each seasonal full-time job. Presently, they are only allowed to make loans of \$10,000 for each seasonal employee. This change better aligns with the seasonality of these small businesses, and will help the program make some projects more feasible. Ultimately, by making this change,

smaller businesses seeking funding for projects will be able to actually utilize the fund for its intended purpose.

The second change reduces the number of years that an applicant must have been a licensed seafood dealer from 5 to 3. This change will make it easier for newer businesses to access this funding, especially during the critical early years of a business. DNR has no concerns with this change being made, and according to MARBIDCO there are two prospective applicants, one who has held a seafood dealer license for 3 years and another nearly 4, who would become eligible with the passage of HB 397.

Combined, these two changes will lower barriers to make existing funding more accessible to businesses. More eligibility means more loans will be made to help expand seafood harvesting processing projects, including historic oyster shucking facilities, as the original legislation was intended to do. Finally, it will also help facilitate an increase in the amount of oyster shells retained in Maryland and returned to the Bay.

With that, I respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 397.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dana Jones" with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Delegate Dana Jones