



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

House Bill 397

Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation – Oyster Shucking House Loan Program

Date: February 12, 2025

To: Environment and Transportation Committee

Position: **FAVORABLE**

From: Allison Colden,
Executive Director

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** House Bill 397 which would modify the Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO) oyster shucking house loan program to make it more accessible to industry participants.

The recently completed report by the Governor’s Task Force on Oyster Shell and Substrate indicated that oyster shell continues to be a limiting resource in Maryland’s oyster recovery efforts. Approximately 50-75% of Maryland’s oysters are sold to out-of-state shucking houses due, in part, to a lack of shucking houses in-state. Each year DNR is forced to purchase shells back for use in restoration and fishery replenishment programs at significant expense to the state.

In 2022, the General Assembly established the MARBIDCO oyster shucking house loan program to make capital available for industry members to stand up new shucking houses in Maryland. HB 397 would expand eligibility for this program by reducing the required number of years in business from five to three and would allow up to \$25,000 to be borrowed (up from \$10,000) for each seasonal full-time job created. These changes would likely increase access to this program and more closely reflect the operations of Maryland’s seafood processors.

While there is no one “silver bullet” to address the availability of oyster shell, increasing the proportion of oysters shucked in-state is a key part of the solution.

For these reasons, CBF urges the Committee’s FAVORABLE report on HB 397.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

Maryland Office • Philip Merrill Environmental Center • 6 Herndon Avenue • Annapolis • Maryland • 21403

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 200,000 members and e-subscribers, including 71,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.