





Testimony before the
House Environment and Transportation Committee
February 26, 2025

House Bill 1022
Oyster Restoration – Use of Federal Funds – Prohibition
Position: **OPPOSE**

Dear Chairman Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and Members of the Committee:

We, the undersigned organizations, respectfully request an **unfavorable** report from the House Environment and Transportation Committee on House Bill 1022. This bill would prohibit the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) from using federal funding for oyster restoration projects in Maryland's oyster sanctuaries.

Federal investments have played a pivotal role in Maryland's oyster restoration success. Through the end of calendar year 2023, more than \$87 million has been invested in Maryland's oyster sanctuaries by state and federal partners.¹ These investments have resulted in more than 1,000 acres of restored reef in Maryland. By all metrics, nearly every reef that has received investment is considered a success.² The outcomes of targeted oyster restoration efforts in Maryland and Virginia's oyster sanctuaries are widely regarded as one of the most successful outcomes to date of the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement.

Maryland's state-federal partnership for oyster restoration originated with President Obama's Executive Order 13508 – Chesapeake Bay Protection and Restoration. E.O. 13508 directed all relevant federal agencies, including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, to work with Bay states to restore oysters in twenty tributaries by 2025. This partnership was reinforced in the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement where the goal was updated and state and federal partners committed to restoring ten tributaries by 2025. As a result of this coordinated

¹ Maryland and Virginia Oyster Restoration Interagency Workgroups of the Chesapeake Bay Program's Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team. 2023 Chesapeake Bay Oyster Restoration Update: Progress toward the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement's 'Ten Tributaries by 2025' Oyster Outcome. 2024.

² Maryland Oyster Restoration Interagency Workgroup under the Chesapeake Bay Program's Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team. 2022 and 2023 Oyster Reef Monitoring Report: Analysis of Data from the 'Ten Tributaries' Sanctuary Oyster Restoration Initiative in Maryland. 2024.

effort and investment, Maryland is on track to meet its current oyster restoration goal by the end of the year.

Throughout 2025, Chesapeake Bay Program partners will continue to review and update metrics and outcomes for the next iteration of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, including oyster restoration goals. Passage of House Bill 1022 would send the message to partners that Maryland is not backing down on oyster recovery. This bill also comes at a time when Maryland is faced with a significant budget deficit and an uncertain federal outlook. To decline federal funding that has been so impactful would be ill-advised and poorly timed.

For these reasons, we urge the Committee's **unfavorable** report on House Bill 1022.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Herring Bay

Annapolis Aquaculture

Annapolis Oyster Co.

Arundel Rivers Federation

Audubon Mid-Atlantic

Baltimore Greenspace

Beaverdam Creek Watershed Watch Group

Blue Water Baltimore

Building Conservation Trust

Cape Conservation Corps

Catoctin Land Trust

Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Chesapeake Beach Green Team

Chesapeake Beach Oyster Cultivation
Society

Chesapeake Oyster Alliance

Coastal Conservation Association Maryland

Double T Oyster Ranch

Fallen Pine Oyster Co.

Friends of the Nanticoke River

Friends of St. Clements Bay

Hollywood Oyster Co.

Living Classrooms Foundation

Mark Street Ventures

Maryland Sea Grant Extension

National Aquarium

National Parks Conservation Association

National Wildlife Federation

Orchard Point Oyster Co.

Oyster Ninja/S.S. Shucking

Phillips Wharf Environmental Center

Severn River Association

Solar Oysters

St. Mary's River Watershed Association

The 6th Branch

True Chesapeake Oyster Co.

Vernal Pool Partners

Waterfront Partnership of Baltimore

Waterkeepers Chesapeake

Wicomico Environmental Trust