



Date: March 6, 2025

Bill: HB 506 – Chesapeake Bay Legacy Act

Position: Support

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

The National Aquarium respectfully requests a favorable report for **House Bill 506 – the Chesapeake Bay Legacy Act**, which would update existing and introduce new programs to improve the health of the Chesapeake Bay, including by promoting regenerative agriculture, supporting climate-ready fishery management and improving water quality monitoring.

Combating climate change and saving wildlife and habitats are strategic conservation goals for the National Aquarium in our operations and across our work with communities and partners on restoration efforts throughout our Chesapeake Bay watershed. Although there has been important progress in Maryland and around the watershed, much more needs to be done. The provisions in this legislation are appropriate policy responses to recommendations from the Comprehensive Evaluation of System Response (CESR) report from the Chesapeake Bay Program Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee¹, which points to the need to adopt new strategies to effectively improve the health of the Bay in the face of ongoing challenges.

The National Aquarium proudly partners with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Eyes on the Bay project, continuously collecting and reporting core water quality parameters in the harbor's tidal waters. This legislation would establish a water quality monitoring program within DNR to provide for a consistent statewide approach and better integrate water quality data into management processes to improve and maintain the health of all Bay waters. Robust water quality monitoring data will complement watershed restoration. Provisions in this bill would also expedite permitting to help ensure effective implementation of the Whole Watershed Act the legislature passed last year.

The impacts of warming ocean and Bay waters and other climate impacts are profoundly affecting fisheries and other aquatic and marine wildlife in Maryland waters and beyond. Importantly, this bill will update and improve DNR fishery management plans, processes and decision-making toward more climate-ready fisheries, in collaboration with regional and federal entities and stakeholder advisory bodies.

We appreciate the Moore-Miller Administration for its commitment to Bay health and believe that the Chesapeake Bay Legacy Act will modernize many conservation practices, enhance watershed restoration, improve water quality, and lead to healthier and more resilient watersheds for people and wildlife. **We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 506.**

Contact:

Ryan Fredriksson
Vice President, Government Affairs
410-385-8276
rfredriksson@aquarium.org

Maggie Ostdahl
Sr. Conservation Policy Manager
410-385-8275
mostdahl@aquarium.org

¹ Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) 2023. Achieving water quality goals in the Chesapeake Bay: A comprehensive evaluation of system response (K. Stephenson & D. Wardrop, Eds.). STAC Publication Number 23-006. Available: <https://www.chesapeake.org/stac/cesr/>