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Maryland General Assembly

House Environment and Transportation Committee / Senate Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee
Annapolis, MD

RE: Opposition to HB1022 – Prohibiting the Use of Federal Funds for Oyster Restoration

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

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB1022 / SB837, which would prohibit the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) from using federal funds for oyster restoration in state sanctuaries starting July 1, 2025. This legislation would be a significant setback to Maryland's oyster recovery efforts, contradicting our long-term restoration goals and jeopardizing our progress in restoring oyster reefs in the Chesapeake Bay.

I have been growing oyster spat for four years and releasing them in the Wye River to support the ongoing restoration efforts for oyster reefs, which are critical for improving the Chesapeake Bay's water quality. As I am sure you are aware, one oyster can filter 50 gallons of water per day. More restored reefs means more oysters, and that means more filter feeding—which can result in clearer water near those reefs. People involved in larger efforts to restore the health of the Chesapeake can count on restored oyster reefs to improve water clarity near those reefs.

Federal funding has been integral to Maryland's oyster restoration success, supporting the restoration of over 1,000 acres of reef with a remarkably high success rate. The collaborative efforts of federal partners—including NOAA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers—alongside state agencies, scientists, and conservation groups, have made Maryland a national leader in oyster restoration. This work has led to measurable improvements in oyster density, biomass, and reef health, as confirmed by the 2022-2023 Interagency Workgroup Monitoring Report.

However, the work is far from finished. Oyster reefs provide essential ecological benefits, including improving water quality, supporting marine life, bolstering the local economy, and strengthening coastal resilience. Limiting funding at this critical time would not only halt progress but could also reverse the gains we have achieved through years of investment, research, and community engagement.

Furthermore, restricting federal support would severely impact key institutions like the UMCES Horn Point Oyster Hatchery, which supplies oyster larvae for restoration, aquaculture, and public

fisheries. With Maryland already facing a budget deficit, the state cannot afford to turn away much-needed federal resources that have been essential in meeting restoration goals.

For these reasons, I urge you to reject HB1022 / SB837 and continue supporting Maryland's leadership in oyster restoration. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Shannon Hamm