



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Senate Bill 916 Workgroup on Seafood Marketing

Date: March 10, 2026

To: Education, Energy, & the Environment Committee

Position: **FAVORABLE**

From: Allison Colden, Ph.D.,
MD Executive Director

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 916** which establishes a joint Maryland Department of Agriculture–Department of Natural Resources seafood marketing workgroup to identify challenges and opportunities in seafood marketing in the State. The workgroup is required to produce a report outlining their findings and recommendations to the General Assembly no later than December 1, 2026.

Maryland’s seafood industry is a defining part of our heritage, our economy, and our connection to Chesapeake Bay. Yet several Maryland-harvested species are significantly constrained by limited or inconsistent marketing. This bill would bring together the expertise of MDA and DNR with the perspectives of harvesters, processors, restaurants, and conservation partners to evaluate market barriers and identify strategic opportunities that strengthen working waterfronts and the Bay.

One of the most urgent needs is expanding the market for invasive blue catfish. This species is now abundant throughout Maryland’s tidal rivers and has well-documented impacts on native fish, crabs, and ecosystem health. While demand for blue catfish is growing, it is still limited by inconsistent marketing, variable consumer awareness, and underdeveloped distribution channels. A coordinated marketing strategy would help increase public recognition of blue catfish as a sustainable seafood option, drive stable demand to support commercial harvest, and reduce predation pressure on native species. Blue catfish represents a rare opportunity wherein promoting a seafood product and tapping into new market segments directly supports Bay restoration.

By establishing a structured workgroup with participation from both MDA and DNR, SB 916 has the potential to identify market gaps and develop coordinated approaches to broadening recognition of Maryland seafood. By positioning Maryland seafood as a high-value product and increasing price-per-pound, marketing can help support watermen and processors’ bottom lines while promoting sustainability and protecting Maryland’s natural resources.

If passed, CBF looks forward to reviewing the recommendations of the workgroup and helping to implement solutions that serve the Bay and Maryland’s seafood industry.

CBF urges the Committee’s FAVORABLE report on SB 916.

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

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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.