

## **SB 0610 (2026) Favorable with Amendments**

**Sean Beck**

Blue catfish are well-established as a nuisance invasive species in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Their effects on blue crabs, oysters, menhaden, and other aquatic species are incredibly detrimental to the populations of those critical species. Our state should employ every option available to remove these fishes from our waterways.

As previously testified by local watermen in the House, increasing the mesh size for gill nets in use for harvesting blue catfish will make this methodology much more effective. We should enable our watermen with the tools they need to manage this population with the ultimate goal of total eradication.

Despite my position listed thus far, it was worth noting that gill nets do not discriminate between species of similar size, and a mesh size of 7" is capable of unintentionally catching the iconic striped bass of spawning size. I ask that the bill be amended under consultation with MD DNR to prohibit the use of these gill nets during the seasons and in the waterways used by the migratory spawning class of striped bass in the Chesapeake and its tributaries. Prohibiting the use of large mesh gill nets during the spawning season for stripers will help protect the spawning class of stripers while also empowering watermen to harvest the invasive blue catfish the rest of the year.

I ask for a favorable report on this bill with an amendment as previously described.