

JACK BAILEY
Legislative District 29
Calvert and St. Mary's Counties

Budget & Taxation Committee



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Annapolis Office
James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 401
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3673
800-492-7122 Ext. 3673
Jack.Bailey@senate.maryland.gov

District Office
23680 Three Notch Road, Unit 101
Hollywood, Maryland 20636
240-309-4238

March 10, 2026

Senate Bill 559 – Natural Resources - Recreational Striped Bass Catch - Reporting

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to introduce Senate Bill 559. This bill would provide data to ensure the accuracy of Maryland's striped bass harvest data by requiring every person who catches striped bass under a Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport fishing license or registration to report the catch to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

This legislation will help resolve a long-standing concern with Maryland's striped bass harvest data. Effective management of the striped bass fishery requires accurate catch data for both the recreational and commercial harvest. Even before my tenure in the legislature, House Bill 1148 of 2014 required the Department of Natural Resources to conduct a study on methods of obtaining more accurate harvest data for the recreational striped bass fishery. In 2020, I sponsored Senate Bill 882, which required DNR to repeat the study from 2014. In 2022, I sponsored Senate Bill 455, which establishes a Chesapeake Bay and Coastal Sport Fishing License Pilot Program and a Task Force on Recreational Fishing Data Collection and Licensing to, among other things, study methods for improving the accuracy of catch and effort estimates in recreational fisheries. This issue has been thoroughly studied for more than 10 years, and the State has not been able to find any effective alternative way to obtain this data through current sampling methods.

Accurate information about the harvest of striped bass is critical to protecting and preserving the future of our State fish. Decisions about quotas and catch limits depend on knowing how many striped bass are harvested each year by both commercial and recreational users. Under current law and regulations, commercial striped bass harvesters and charter boats are required to report exact data with catch reports. There is no equivalent required reporting for recreational anglers. With approximately 218,000 recreational licensees and others who are allowed to fish without a license, recreational anglers can contribute significantly to the pressure that our State's striped bass population faces, even if each angler only catches one striped bass.

Maryland would not be the first state to implement such a reporting requirement. This December, North Carolina began requiring reporting for recreational catch of striped bass and other species of fish. Senate Bill 559 gives DNR flexibility on how to implement this requirement; however, the bill does specify that DNR must have a method for individuals who do not have Internet access to be able to make this report. As an example of one potential option, this February, DNR submitted a report required as part of last session's Joint Chairmen's Report exploring the feasibility of establishing a mobile application-based method of reporting the recreational catch of striped bass.

This bill is effective January 1, 2027, so it will go into effect at the start of next year's fishing season. I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 559. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Bailey".

Senator Jack Bailey