

March 10, 2026

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Office Bldg.
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Senate Bill 875 – Oysters – Rotational Harvest – Pilot Program

Position: **OPPOSE**

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 875. We, the undersigned, represent the thousands of oyster gardeners participating in community-based restoration of the Bay's oyster resource each year.

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Maryland Oyster Gardening Program and the Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) Marylanders Grow Oysters Program were established to empower local citizens who wanted to make a difference in recovering the Bay's oyster populations. Each year, oyster gardeners receive several thousand oyster spat to grow out in cages hanging from their docks or on their property. Oyster gardeners tend these cages carefully during the growing season, cleaning off excess algae, removing sediment and ensuring the oysters are growing well. This close care and dedication pays off at the end of the season when these oysters are collected and placed in oyster sanctuaries throughout the Bay.

Through these innovative programs, oyster gardeners have planted more than 25 million oysters on sanctuary bars throughout Maryland waters. Because these oysters are grown for a year in a protected environment, they are of larger size when placed on sanctuary reefs. This affords them higher survival, greater reproductive capacity, and higher filtration rates than smaller oysters.

Oysters are the Bay's most prodigious filters and an important keystone in the ecosystem. They provide habitat to other fish and shellfish species, they clean our water, and they reduce nutrient pollution. That is why we dedicate countless hours to the care and husbandry of our oyster 'gardens.'

Senate Bill 875 would require DNR to open the Lower Chester, Lower Choptank, Herring Bay, and Lower Mainstem oyster sanctuaries to harvest, which includes areas that have received annual plantings by oyster gardeners. While smaller in scale than state-supported restoration projects, we believe our significant investments of time and effort deserve protection from harvest. Before targeting sanctuaries, which have received significant restoration investment from watershed organizations and oyster gardeners, we urge the state to direct any investigations into the value of rotational harvest to the more than 300,000 acres of Maryland's bay bottom currently open to harvest. Protecting these sanctuaries from harvest would allow the oysters to grow, reproduce, and create self-sustaining populations that are so critical to the oyster's recovery.

We urge the Committee to protect the investments of the hundreds of Maryland citizens contributing to oyster restoration annually, and we respectfully request an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 875.

Sincerely,

Kendall Kelly
Baltimore, MD

Julie Kurland
Takoma Park, MD
Marjory Gibson
Annapolis, MD

Allison Dinwoodie
Baltimore, MD

Ryan Butts
Carney, MD

Ben Carroll
Carney, MD

Ralph Montfort
Bethesda, MD

Tim Hucko
Hollywood, MD

Jeannie Hucko
Hollywood, MD

Jon Lawrence
Shady Side, MD

Jill King
Annapolis, MD

Steve Durante
West River, MD

Lizz Durante
West River, MD

Jennifer Welch
Saint Leonard, MD

Jessie Birndorf
Dundalk, MD

Robert Tapbergenov
Halethorpe, MD

Patti Child
Severna Park, MD

Stephen Metzler
Deale, MD
Amber Metzler
Deale, MD

David Smith
Churchton, MD

Ruby Maghoney
Baltimore, MD

Deborah Roderick Stark
Harwood, MD

James Foster
Shady Side, MD

Abigail Thorton
Baltimore, MD

Emma Hester
Baltimore, MD

Raymond Zepka
Baltimore, MD

Jenna Caruso
Baltimore, MD

Allison Dammer
Baltimore, MD

Maeve McNeil
Baltimore, MD

Madison Tina
Baltimore, MD

Katherine Hancin
Baltimore, MD

Kayla Baker
Baltimore, MD

Lauren Tillage
Baltimore, MD

Gabriel Gomez
Baltimore, MD
Andrew Norman
Baltimore, MD

Molly Suplee
Baltimore, MD

Marcia Diehl
Takoma Park, MD

Nancy Cohen
Takoma Park, MD

Roger McGary
Takoma Park, MD

Benjamin Petre
Severna Park, MD

Gregory Wolfe
Severna Park, MD

Gina Friel
Grasonville, MD

Nicole Love
Shady Side, MD

Jeffery Love
Shady Side, MD

Dr. Hiram Larew
Churchton, MD

David Redford
Annapolis, MD

Deirdre McMahon
Shady Side, MD

James Foster
Shady Side, MD

Michael Schaetzle
Baltimore, MD

Thomas Smith
Baltimore, MD
David V. Way
Shady Side, MD

Ruth Sanchez-Way, PhD
Shady Side, MD

Jason Goodman
Lake Shore, MD

Stanley Watkins
Annapolis, MD

Bruce Ogden
West River, MD

Jill Segraves
West River, MD

Robert Potter
Arnold, MD

Chris Moe
Lusby, MD

Don Adams
Reisterstown, MD

David Johnson
Severna Park, MD

Jon Coile
Shady Side, MD

Terese Schlachter
Shady Side, MD

Larry Pendleton
Rockville, MD

Csilla Szabo
Severna Park, MD

Michael Erdos
Severna Park, MD

Mike Krissoff
Annapolis, MD
Tom Sachse
West River, MD

Michael Ryan
Baltimore, MD

Cary Kelly
Baltimore, MD

Dan Bacot
Annapolis, MD

Claus Nicklas
West River, MD

Cate Bower
West River, MD

Cecilia Callahan
Lutherville, MD

Fred Schober
Annapolis, MD

Ray Quinnette
Abell, MD

Jan Goessing
West River, MD

Susanne Goessing
West River, MD

Paul Merena
Westminster, MD

Girl Scout Troop 1348
Central Maryland

Brownlee Kiernan
Grasonville, MD

Johnny Schultz
Baltimore, MD

Andrea Sloan
Rock Hall, MD
Andrew Sloan
Rock Hall, MD

Robert Cardoni
Catonsville, MD

Victoria Cardoni
Catonsville, MD

Henry Smith
Tracys Landing, MD

Mary Kay Page
Baltimore, MD

Maximilian Schneider
Baltimore, MD

Katelyn Brown
Baltimore, MD