

Maryland Charter Boat Association
Written Testimony in Support
Senate Bill 755

Natural Resources – Striped Bass Recreational Seasons and Fisheries Regulations

March 3, 2026

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Maryland Charter Boat Association, we respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 755.

Over the past two years, Maryland's charter fishing industry has experienced severe economic hardship as a result of striped bass regulations that have disproportionately impacted the Charter Boats-for-Hire sector. While these regulations were intended to support conservation goals, they have placed an extraordinary burden on small businesses that rely on reasonable access to Chesapeake Bay fisheries to remain viable.

Maryland's charter captains operate small, family-owned businesses that support tourism and local economies throughout the Chesapeake Bay region. The impact of recent restrictions extends well beyond charter vessels themselves, affecting marinas, bait and tackle shops, waterfront restaurants, hotels, and other small businesses that depend on recreational fishing activity.

Industry Impact

- Charter fishing businesses have experienced an estimated 65–70 percent reduction in activity over the past two years.
- 407 charter boats are currently registered in Maryland's FACTS electronic reporting system.
- Hundreds of small businesses depend on access to Chesapeake Bay fisheries.
- Many county economies along the Chesapeake Bay rely heavily on recreational fishing and charter boat activity.

While the charter sector represents only a small portion of the overall striped bass harvest, it has carried a disproportionate share of the economic impact from recent regulatory changes. Charter fishing provides a highly managed and accountable way for the public to access Maryland's fisheries while generating substantial economic activity for waterfront communities.

At the same time, we recognize the importance of responsible conservation. Targeting striped bass during spawning months in the Chesapeake Bay creates a significant risk to the reproductive success of the species and its ability to rebuild to sustainable levels. Protecting spawning females during this critical period is essential to achieving long-term recovery goals.

Senate Bill 755 offers a balanced and responsible path forward—protecting the striped bass spawning population while helping Maryland's charter fishing businesses recover from unprecedented economic losses.

For these reasons, the Maryland Charter Boat Association respectfully urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 755.

Respectfully submitted,



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President

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