



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Written Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 755
Natural Resources - Striped Bass Recreational Seasons and Fisheries Regulations

Good afternoon, Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Committee.

For the record, I am C. Anthony Muse, representing the 26th Legislative District in Prince George's County. I respectfully submit this testimony in support of Senate Bill 755.

Senate Bill 755 was introduced in response to serious concerns raised by stakeholders regarding regulations being considered by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources affecting striped bass—known across Maryland as rockfish. These concerns center on two critical issues: the long-term sustainability of the striped bass population and the significant economic impact current regulatory decisions are having on Maryland's fishing and tourism industries.

First, SB 755 prohibits the Maryland Department of Natural Resources from establishing a recreational catch-and-release season for striped bass between March 1 and April 30. This period coincides with the spawning season in the Chesapeake Bay, when the species is most vulnerable. Targeting striped bass during key spawning periods in the Chesapeake Bay raises legitimate concerns about whether we are protecting the species during one of the most critical phases of its life cycle. There is growing concern about the ability of the striped bass spawning population to meet the 2029 target for spawning stock biomass. Achieving that benchmark is essential to maintaining a healthy and sustainable fishery.

Second, the bill provides clear statutory direction for recreational and charter boat summer and fall seasons, establishing consistent guidelines for anglers while maintaining reasonable conservation limits. We must recognize the real economic consequences facing Maryland's charter fishing industry. Regulations affecting striped bass have already had a substantial impact on charter boat operators, recreational anglers, tourism, and local businesses—particularly in Eastern Shore and Southern Maryland communities where the fishing economy supports countless families and small businesses.

Equally important, SB 755 requires the Department to prepare and submit an economic impact statement when proposed fisheries regulations are expected to have a major impact on stakeholders. Regulations affecting fisheries do not occur in a vacuum. They have real

consequences for charter boat captains, recreational anglers, tourism operators, small businesses, and coastal communities across Maryland.

Proponents of this legislation will provide testimony highlighting how socioeconomic impacts have been disregarded, scientific studies have been basically dismissed; which show the harm to the striped bass population, and very important historic regulations have been ignored.

Senate Bill 755 seeks to bring greater balance to this conversation. It recognizes that responsible stewardship requires both sound science and thoughtful consideration of the communities whose livelihoods depend on the health of this fishery.

The Chesapeake Bay is the largest estuary in the Northern Hemisphere and one of Maryland's most treasured natural resources. We have a responsibility to be good stewards of this ecosystem while also protecting the economic vitality of the communities that rely on it.

I respectfully urge the Committee to carefully consider the testimony presented by supporters of this bill and to move Senate Bill 755 forward so that Maryland can continue working toward a sustainable striped bass fishery while supporting the industries and communities that depend on it.

Thank you for your consideration, and I respectfully request a favorable report.