



House Bill 1599

Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program – Established

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Environment & Transportation Committee

Date: March 13, 2026

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1599. This bill would establish the Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program to support oyster propagation and replenishment projects in areas of the Chesapeake Bay affected by development associated with the Helen Delich Bentley Port of Baltimore. By directing resources to targeted restoration efforts, HB 1599 offers a practical strategy to help offset impacts and strengthen the long-term health of the Bay.

Oysters are a cornerstone of Maryland’s identity and a critical component of the Bay’s ecosystem and local economies. As natural filter feeders, oysters improve water clarity and quality—advancing restoration goals and supporting underwater grasses and the broader food web. Oyster reefs also function as “living infrastructure,” helping buffer shorelines from wave action, reducing erosion, and increasing resilience for coastal communities. Beyond these environmental benefits, oysters sustain working waterfronts through aquaculture, seafood markets, and heritage industries that remain central to many county economies.

HB 1599 helps move the needle toward ensuring the Chesapeake Bay remains a thriving environmental and economic asset for Maryland. Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report for HB 1599.