



Wes Moore, Governor  
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor  
Josh Kurtz, Secretary  
David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary

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April 1, 2026

**BILL NUMBER: SENATE BILL 558 - THIRD READER**

**SHORT TITLE: CHESAPEAKE BAY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM AND MARYLAND SEAFOOD INDUSTRY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FUND - ESTABLISHED**

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION**

### **EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT'S POSITION**

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Since 1997, the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) has provided a grant to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to be used solely for the purpose of oyster recovery within Maryland waters of the Chesapeake Bay. This funding has been used to fund a variety of shellfish program operations.

DNR has worked closely with MDOT over the past several months to not only fully restore all \$2 million in funding for FY 2026 oyster reseeded program, but is currently in the process of entering into a new, multi-year MOU.

The Maryland Seafood Industry Financial Assistance Fund, through the Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation, would provide additional financial assistance to tidal fish licensees who qualify.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

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There is a history of agreements between MDOT and DNR since 1997 for the purposes of funding oyster recovery in the waters of the Chesapeake Bay.

Bushel and severance taxes and the oyster surcharge are a major revenue source for the Department's shellfish division, however, the utility of this funding is restricted to repletion of the natural oyster bars of the State by Natural Resources Articles 4-701 and 4-1020 Annotated Code and cannot be used for the studies or assessments necessary to manage this fishery.

### **BILL EXPLANATION**

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The bill, as amended, would add \$2.25 million to the annual budget bill for FY 28 and each FY after for an appropriation to the program from the Transportation Trust Fund in the Transportation Article. The amended bill requires an allocation of at least \$1.5 million of the funds to be used for oyster propagation and replenishment programs. The amended bill also creates a Maryland Seafood Industry Financial Assistance Fund through the Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation.

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