

April 1, 2026

The Honorable Marc Korman
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
250 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Letter of Information – Senate Bill 558 – Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program – Established

Dear Chair Korman and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on Senate Bill 558 but offers the following information for the committee's consideration.

SB 558, as amended, would establish a Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program at the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to provide funding for oyster propagation and replenishment programs. This program would be funded through a mandated appropriation of \$2.25 million from the Transportation Trust Fund annually beginning in Fiscal Year 2028.

MDOT understands the vital importance of the oyster population to the health and economy of the Chesapeake Bay, and since 2005, it has provided funding from the Transportation Trust Fund toward oyster propagation and replenishment activities through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between MDOT and DNR. Last fall, MDOT fully restored all \$2 million in funding for FY 2026 for the oyster reseeded program consistent with the existing MOU. While the MOU ends in FY 2026, MDOT and DNR have begun conversations to enter into a new, multi-year MOU. Additionally, MDOT has budgeted \$2 million in FY 2027 to show its commitment to continuing this partnership with DNR. MDOT will keep the General Assembly informed as the conversations regarding the new MOU continue. In next year's draft Consolidated Transportation Program, MDOT will fully fund the term of the multi-year MOU.

In advancing this new MOU, MDOT will note the broad nexus between oysters, the health of the Bay, and transportation-related impacts. MDOT and DNR will also work to ensure the funds directly support the repletion and restoration of oysters and oyster beds within the Chesapeake Bay relative to administrative costs.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully request the Committee consider this information when deliberating Senate Bill 558.

Respectfully submitted,

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