



# CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

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**Senate Bill 166**  
**Shellfish Aquaculture – Penalties –**  
**Suspension or Revocation of Permit or Registration Card**

**Date:** April 1, 2026  
**To:** Environment & Transportation Committee

**Position: FAVORABLE**  
**From:** Dr. Allison Colden,  
Executive Director

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 166**, which, as amended, imposes the roughly the same administrative penalty schedule to permit holders or authorized harvesters in Maryland’s shellfish aquaculture (“oyster farming”) industry as the public fishery for significant poaching or public health violations.

CBF believes that oyster poaching by any individual, including oyster farmers, is a serious offense that should result in significant penalties. Amendments from the original bill exempt husbandry practices that are standard in the oyster farming industry, ensuring that the key differences between the two sectors do not result in unintended consequences for oyster farmers.

The amended bill also addresses a key issue related to revocation, that is the disposition of the leased area and any remaining gear at the time of revocation. Oyster farming can include the use of floating cages or cages on bottom that hold containerized oysters. If left unattended and unmaintained, this gear can become a hazard to navigation and the environment. As amended, SB 166 provides a pathway for the revoked leaseholder to appropriately transfer or forfeit any remaining gear and/or oysters.

**CBF urges the Committee’s FAVORABLE report on SB 166.**

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at [mstegman@cbf.org](mailto:mstegman@cbf.org).

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*The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 200,000 members and e-subscribers, including 71,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.*