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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Written Testimony in Support of HB 97 – State Designation – State Shark

March 17, 2026

Dear Chair Wells and Members of the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of House Bill 97 – State Designation – State Shark. This legislation would designate the megalodon (*Otodus megalodon*) as the official State shark of Maryland.

I am proud to represent the region that is home to the Calvert Marine Museum, which the General Assembly has previously designated as Maryland's State Paleontology Collection and Research Center. This legislation was introduced at the request of the museum, which houses more than 1,700 fossilized megalodon teeth and conducts extensive research on the species and its role in Maryland's natural history.

The megalodon, or *Otodus megalodon*, lived in this region for millions of years. Although now extinct, it remains one of the most recognizable prehistoric species associated with Maryland's fossil record. At nearly 80 feet in length, the megalodon was the largest shark to ever live and among the largest predators in Earth's history. Fossil evidence found throughout Maryland, including along the Calvert Cliffs, demonstrates that this region was once part of a thriving prehistoric marine ecosystem. Fossilized teeth from this species have been discovered not only in Calvert County but also in Anne Arundel, Caroline, Charles, Dorchester, Prince George's, and St. Mary's Counties.

In addition to teeth, fossil whale and dolphin bones discovered along Calvert Cliffs bear bite marks attributed to predatory or scavenging activity from megalodon, providing valuable scientific insight into the ancient food chain that once existed in the waters that now form the Chesapeake Bay region.

While Maryland waters today are home to a variety of shark species that inhabit the Chesapeake Bay, the megalodon stands out as one of the most notable sharks connected to our State's natural heritage. The fossils found along Maryland's shoreline attract visitors, students, researchers, and families each year. These discoveries serve as powerful educational tools that inspire curiosity about science, paleontology, and the natural history of our region.

Designating the megalodon as the official State shark would not only recognize this important part of Maryland's prehistoric past, but it would also support the educational mission and research efforts of the Calvert Marine Museum while highlighting one of the unique natural treasures of Southern Maryland. Additionally, Maryland would become the first state in the nation to officially designate a State shark.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 97.