

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 6

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By: **Delegates Jacobs, Arentz, Buckel, Chisholm, Foley, Griffith, Guyton, Hartman, Hornberger, Hutchinson, Kipke, Mangione, McComas, T. Morgan, Otto, Rose, Stonko, and Tomlinson**

Introduced and read first time: February 8, 2024

Assigned to: Rules and Executive Nominations

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION

1 A House Joint Resolution concerning

2 **Commercial Fishery Disaster Declaration Due to Invasive Species**

3 FOR the purpose of supporting the Governor's request for a federal commercial fishery
4 disaster declaration; encouraging further efforts to obtain certain assistance to
5 protect and rehabilitate the State's commercial fisheries; and generally relating to a
6 commercial fishery disaster declaration for fisheries in the State.

7 WHEREAS, Blue catfish were introduced to Virginia for purposes of creating a
8 recreational fishery but have since spread throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed; and

9 WHEREAS, Blue catfish out-compete native species for habitat and food and pose a
10 threat to commercial fisheries in the State, including blue crab, white perch, yellow perch,
11 and American eel; and

12 WHEREAS, The Department of Natural Resources is concerned about observed high
13 densities of invasive species and the potential negative effects of these populations on the
14 State's commercial fishery species; and

15 WHEREAS, The decline of the State's commercial fishery species is detrimental to
16 the State's commercial watermen and economy as a whole; and

17 WHEREAS, On March 16, 2023, Governor Wes Moore requested from the U.S.
18 Department of Commerce a commercial fishery disaster declaration under provisions of the
19 Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and the Interjurisdictional
20 Fisheries Act due to the expanding population of invasive species, including blue catfish,
21 flathead catfish, and snakehead, in the Maryland waters of the Chesapeake Bay; and

22 WHEREAS, A commercial fishery disaster declaration would qualify the State for
23 federal fishery disaster assistance and may be granted after a state experiences a large,



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1 sudden, and unexpected decrease in fish stock that causes a significant loss in a commercial
2 fishery; and

3 WHEREAS, In December 2023, the U.S. Department of Commerce declined the
4 State's request for a commercial fishery disaster declaration, ruling that blue catfish have
5 not had sufficient impact on commercial fishery revenue to qualify for disaster aid; and

6 WHEREAS, According to the Department of Natural Resources, the impact of
7 invasive species cannot be underestimated and the State cannot delay action to address the
8 damage caused by invasive species; now, therefore, be it

9 RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the General
10 Assembly:

11 (1) supports Governor Wes Moore's request to the U.S. Department of
12 Commerce for a commercial fishery disaster declaration; and

13 (2) encourages further efforts to obtain federal assistance to protect and
14 rehabilitate the State's commercial fisheries as a result of an abundance of invasive species;
15 and be it further

16 RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be forwarded by the Department of
17 Legislative Services to the Honorable Wes Moore, Governor of Maryland; the Honorable
18 William C. Ferguson, IV, President of the Senate of Maryland; and the Honorable Adrienne
19 A. Jones, Speaker of the House of Delegates.