



Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

3358 Davidsonville Road • Davidsonville, MD 21035 • (410) 922-3426

February 26, 2020

To: House Environment & Transportation Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

Re: **Support of HB 856 - Unlawful Taking of Oysters From Submerged Land Leases and Water Column Leases - Penalties**

On behalf of our member families, I submit this written testimony in support of HB 856, legislation that establishes a minimum fine of \$2,000 and maximum fine of \$3,000 for unlawfully taking oysters from a submerged land lease or water column lease. It also requires a person that is convicted to take a class on Maryland's Commercial Fishery Laws and, until that class is completed, the person's commercial fishing licenses will remain suspended.

Several aquaculture operations have significant theft annually and, in many cases, it is very tough to catch the thieves in the act. However, when they are caught, they get minimal fines and basically a slap on the hand. Stiffer penalties need to be put in place for both the person stealing oysters and the companies that knowingly purchase the stolen oysters.

The sponsor of the bill plans to introduce amendments to also include penalties for the buyers who knowingly purchase stolen or undersized oysters.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS SB 856 ALONG WITH THE SPONSOR AMENDMENTS

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colby Ferguson'.

Colby Ferguson
Director of Government Relations

For more information contact Colby Ferguson at (240) 578-0396