

Statement of Amy Craig in Opposition to SB 321

Good Afternoon Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Committee.

I ask this Committee to not recommend the approval of SB321. This legislation would take away the voice of the public and focus on the will of a few that this very legislature wanted to prevent when enacting the Boat Act of 1960. By removing the sunset clause from the original bill (SB93), the public will no longer have a voice in the process of regulating the open waters of the Chesapeake Bay and one of Maryland's greatest natural resources.

This legislative body of Maryland set precedent to take politics, access of special interests, and contributions out of determining how our precious waterways will be enjoyed by Marylanders. You had the forethought and wisdom to create a body which will use facts and take all stakeholders interests into account in order to advise the Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources. I ask you to allow the Boat Act Advisory Committee and the Secretary to continue to work in the manner you legislated---to continue to work in the best interest of all Marylanders.

At this time of restricted activities and increasing anxiety, many people have turned to the waterways and boating as a safe family activity. Boating during COVID-19 is one of the safest — not to mention most enjoyable — activities you can do this summer, says Colleen Richardson, director of Discover Boating. "As annual traditions such as camping and sporting events have been canceled, more Americans are drawn to the water. It doesn't get more socially distant than boating with loved ones. Studies have shown it's a boon for mental health and well-being."

Maryland is home to nearly 200,000 registered boats and over 50,000 unregistered boats such as canoes, kayaks, and other small vessels. Boating is an important part of many Marylanders' lives.

As the pandemic made it difficult for us to participate in our typical forms of exercise like going to the gym, new powerboat sales were up 12% from 2019. That is a high not seen since the Great Recession of 2008. October was a particularly big month in 2020, with sales up 30% compared to the same month in 2019. Tied to this, first time boat ownership increased last year as well, which has not happened in more than a decade. According to President of National Marine Manufacturers Association Frank Hugelmeyer, those new boaters helped spur growth of versatile, smaller boats - less than 26ft - that are often towed to local waterways and provide a variety of boating experience, from fishing to watersports." Smaller boats like runabouts, jet boats and personal watercraft are more affordable at this time of economic uncertainty, **62% of boaters have an annual household income of \$100,000 or less and 95% of boats are under 26ft long that can be trailered to local launch sites according to NMMA.** These smaller boats are a gateway to further boat ownership. To extrapolate, the new boaters are not usually waterfront property owners, they are people who want to be on the water but do not have privilege of direct ownership access.

Maryland is fortunate to have the Chesapeake Bay as one of its many Natural Resources in this time of pandemic and restricted activity. The plethora of activities that can occur on the water is a blessing for the State's residents and beckons visitors. Whether rowing, paddle boarding,

waterskiing, fishing or sailing, the options for safe, socially distanced activities is vast. Why would the legislature want to PERMANENTLY limit the public from enjoying the outdoors and nature especially during this Pandemic?

I ask this Committee to not recommend the approval of SB 321. Please leave the process of regulating the State's waters to those that have experience on the water, who provide a forum for users of the water to express their views on regulations to impact the State's waters. By legislative action, you are effectively taking away the voice from many users of the water and only listening to those that live on this body of water. Did this legislative body put out an alert of the change to the waterway? Not in a way that everyday boaters would see. The Department of Natural Resources places buoys at the areas facing regulatory action. How is the boater to know what you are doing today? Have you visited the body of water in question? Have you inquired with the Natural Resources Police if this is an area with problems and citations? Do you know that this is ONE of THREE Controlled Ski Areas in the ENTIRE state of Maryland? Do you know that this area was set aside for waterskiing by the Severn River Management Plan? That National Record Holders have practiced here? That kids heading to college to ski with collegiate teams are juggling schedules of school and work to fit in a practice set at this location which is protected and safe?

As part of the Department of Natural Resources, the Maryland Boat Act Advisory Committee has developed, in its more than 50 years of existence, a process to seek and review the facts of each side of a proposed regulation. The committee uses those facts which include site visits, public testimony, current laws and regulations, and reports from Department of Natural Resources experts to make a recommendation utilizing the centuries of collective boating experience of committee members. Members of the Boat Act Advisory Committee are volunteers that include watermen, powerboaters and sailors, marina owner/operators, kayakers and paddle boarders, waterfront property owners and trailer boaters. Committee members take their duties seriously and participate in vigorous debate, taking into consideration their experiences and the need to balance regulation and safety, while maximizing access to the great waterways of the State of Maryland.

Will this legislation become the gateway to ensuring only those with a relationship of powerful Senators they support can access all public waterways? Or will this committee put a stop to those with influence eventually dictating where the less connected and their families are allowed to enjoy the collective natural resources of our State. Where do you stand? Are you for allowing the most people to enjoy the State's resources or only a select few.

Please vote against SB321 which takes away the voice of the boating public and circumvents the authority of the Secretary of Natural Resources. The process is not broken, it historically works well. If you open the door to allowing disgruntled petitioners to push legislation to control the waters of the State, you can expect a heavy agenda of legislation.