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**RECREATIONAL ANGLERS
WORKING TO CONSERVE, PROMOTE, AND ENHANCE MARYLAND'S
MARINE RESOURCES**

February 23, 2021

To: Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chairman
Honorable Dana Stein, Vice Chairman
Honorable Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee

Re: House Bill 1117 – Kent Narrows Bridge – State Highway Right-of-Way – Fishing Prohibitions

CCA Maryland Position: OPPOSE

House Bill 1117 prohibits fishing in the State Highway Administration (SHA) Right-of-Way at Kent Narrows in Queen Anne's County.

As written, this legislation would remove existing access to the popular fishing area under the 50/301 Kent Narrows bridge and adjacent to the public boat ramp.

Recreational anglers are a critical component of the Maryland economy and play an essential role in funding natural resource conservation that benefits all Marylanders. However, Maryland continues to struggle with providing reliable access for recreational fishing, with functionally all the shoreline in Queen Anne's County subject to private ownership and the subsequent limits on access to the water. Access is the single biggest reason that anglers stop fishing, and the further loss of access in such a popular location would be problematic.

As Maryland's only statewide recreational angling membership organization, CCA Maryland is concerned by the loss of any public access points for recreational angling, especially shore-based opportunities that allow the most-broad portion of our communities with access to the water. As we seek to provide equitable opportunities to Maryland's natural resources, access points like Kent Narrows are absolutely critical to meeting that goal.

Fishing access areas like the one under the 50/301 bridge are often funded by Maryland DNR's Waterway Improvement Program, a fund supported directly by excise taxes on boating and fishing activities, and as such, should be conceived in the spirit of enhancing access for those same stakeholders.

It is our understanding that this legislation was introduced to address a safety issue that relates to fishing from the Rt. 18 Kent Narrows drawbridge, and the bridge abutment on each end, but not to the entirety of the area encompassed by the current SHA right-of-way. It is our belief that these safety concerns can be met in a way that is compatible with retaining this recreational access.

For these reasons, CCA Maryland respectfully request a un-favorable vote on House Bill 1117 as drafted.

Much obliged,

Steven K. Kline
Chairman
Government Relations Committee

MDOT SHA Right-Of-Way

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