

SB 713
Christopher Warthen
Support

Good afternoon, members of the Senate

My name is Christopher Warthen, my full time job for the past 19 years has been the owner and operator of a successful lawn care business that serves Baltimore and Howard County. When I am not working, I take every moment available to me, with my sons, to spend time on the Chesapeake Bay and it's Estuaries fishing. I've spent thousands of hours on the water over the past 50 years and look forward to many more.

It is an honor testify before you, so that I, along with many others will be able to do what we love for many future generations. I'd like to thank Senator Reilly for inviting me to be here today.

I was born in Baltimore and have lived in Maryland my entire live. As a young child my grandfather introduced me to fishing and I quickly developed a love for it, that has carried though my entire life. As a father I have passed this love on to my children and friends with children. I have spent many of my adult days on the water introducing youth and adults to fishing and crabbing. Mostly fishing for White Perch and Rock Fish. It's crazy how a little fish can put such a big smile on any face.

We have a huge problem in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, and it is destroying our echo system. I'm sure at some

point you have heard about the Northern Snake Head fish. This fish was released into a small pond in Crofton Md in 2002. Unfortunately, the pond flooded, and overflowed into a stream that feeds into The Potomac River drainage of the Chesapeake Bay. This was the beginning of our problem. The Snake Head Is like no other fish with its ability to live out of water and move across land. Research shows that “The Snake Head reaches sexual maturity Between one and three years, depending on growing conditions. They can spawn up to five times a year, each time laying as many as fifteen thousand eggs. One Snake Head can lay up to seventy-five thousand eggs in one year”. This invasive species is destroying of fishery. We Must ACT NOW! They eat everything and are clearly eating White Perch, along with other small fish that are so important to our echo system. I had heard about the Snake Head being seen on the Severn River but had never seen them myself, until a couple years ago. This also happen to be when the perch fishing seemed to slow up a bit. Not catching nearly what we had caught in previous years. After seeing the Snake Head, I purchased a Fishing Bow to do my part to help manage this invasive Species that’s destroying our fishery. Sadly, a few days later I learned that it was illegal to use “anything other than Rod hook and line” on the Severn River and a few other Tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay. From what I’ve found this is according to Article 4-714 written in 2013 Which state that “Rod, Hook and Line” are the only means allowed to catch fish on selected rivers. I believe this was done to prevent large commercial operations form clouding the recreational water ways with large, long nets and other fishing gear. This was also long before the Snake Head became such a huge a problem. I know some people who Bow Fish for Snake Head and have had a lot of success. Sometimes catching as many as forty in one night on the Severn River.(prior to knowing it was illegal) This is an effective way to help manage this

destructive species before they eat all of the Perch and smaller species, including juvenile Rockfish and soft crabs and many more that have struggled to maintain a healthy population. Catching these fish has been an important way feeding our families over the years. As the Snake Head grow to larger sizes they will eat more and larger prey. I recently saw a video of a man cleaning a Snake head fish. He opened the belly and found an entire duck in the stomach. This could have easily been someone's small dog enjoying a swim. We must act now!

Multi State and Federal funding up to \$138.1 million this year have been invested into *EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program*. *This program is planting streamside buffers, restoring oyster reefs, installing rain gardens, and pursuing the many other projects to reduce pollution that are central to implementing state cleanup plans. Because of this program, the bay's and associated rivers' fish population began coming back to the healthiest levels this state has seen in decades. In addition to the famous "rock fish", we have seen increases in Spanish Maceral, Red Drum, Chain Pickerel, Sea Trout, Blue Fish, Cobia and more. This program is working to clean the bay. Unfortunately, the clean water also helps the invasive species as well. We are aware of the destructive Northern Snake Head, and research would suggest they aren't going away. If we don't take every avenue to control the population, they will completely take over our fishery. WE Must act now before it's too late!*

I'm open to any and all ideas to help manage this invasive, destructive species. Bow fishing is an affordable and effective place to start.

I look forward to one day passing my love of Fishing and spending days on the water to my grandchildren. I need your help to make that happen.

I'm willing and committed to do my part in protecting and preserving our fisheries and water ways from this and other invasive species.

Today I'm asking you do your part and Pass Senate Bill. SB-713.

Thank you for your time.

Christopher Warthen