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House Environment and Transportation Committee

House Bill 1217

Natural Resources – Oyster Inspection and Severance Taxes - Increase

Testimony in **SUPPORT with amendment**

Friday, March 4, 2022

The Delmarva Fisheries Association (DFA) urges a **favorable** report on House Bill 1217 with an amendment to include the Baltimore County Oyster Committee on the list of county oyster committees intended to utilize the revenue generated for the betterment of the public fishery.

The “bushel tax” is a fundamental source of industry generated revenue for the repletion of natural oyster bars through Chesapeake Bay. The additional revenue generated **from** the industry with the passage of HB 1217 (by increasing from \$1.00 to \$2.00 the per bushel “severance tax” paid by commercial oyster harvesters for oysters harvested from public natural oyster bars) will give a boost to the ongoing efforts of County Oyster Committees to routinely plant oyster seed and shell in strategic locations throughout the Bay and tributaries for purposes of oyster replenishment and propagation. The conditions in parts of the Bay for natural oyster propagation are the best in decades. More resources now in the hands of County Oyster Committees, where the experience and knowledge about oysters is consolidated, will result in more oysters in the water.

DFA urges a FAVORABLE report on House Bill 1217.

DFA represents over 80% of the commercial watermen in Maryland; individuals whose work and unique way of life spanning several generations depend upon sustainable harvests in a healthy Chesapeake Bay.

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