



Testimony in SUPPORT of SB386 – Certified Local Farm and Chesapeake Invasive Species Provider Program - Establishment

February 15, 2023

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT of SB386** on behalf of ShoreRivers. ShoreRivers is a river protection group on Maryland's Eastern Shore with more than 2,000 members. Our mission is to protect and restore our Eastern Shore waterways through science-based advocacy, restoration, and education.

This bill will change the Certified Local Farmer Enterprise Program to be the Certified Local Farm and Chesapeake Invasive Species Provider Program. By including invasive species providers in this program, it will incentivize the catching and usage of invasive species like blue catfish and snakeheads, which wreak ecological and economic devastation on our Chesapeake ecosystem. These invasive species threaten native fish populations because they are aggressive, adapt to a variety of water conditions, and can outcompete native fish for food and resources. They have proliferated the Bay watershed, and while recreational fishermen do catch some of them, it is really our commercial watermen who make the largest impact in reducing the population of these invasive species.

This bill has a very low fiscal note as state agencies, including the Maryland Department of Agriculture, are already working on this program for local farm produce, so adding invasive species to it would have minimal impact on programmatic expenses. It will also provide a benefit to local businesses as the demand for these delicious invasive species increases. The more these harmful fish species are removed from our local waterways, the healthier our aquatic ecosystems will be. Adding invasive species to the procurement requirements for state agencies also shows Maryland's commitment to improving the health of Chesapeake Bay and supporting the local community that depends on clean water and thriving native ecosystems.

For these reasons stated above, ShoreRivers urges the Committee to adopt a **FAVORABLE** report on SB386.

Sincerely,

Zack Kelleher,
Sassafras Riverkeeper, on behalf of ShoreRivers

ShoreRivers

Isabel Hardesty, Executive Director

Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper | Matt Pluta, Choptank Riverkeeper | Zack Kelleher Sassafras Riverkeeper

shorerivers.org | 443.385.0511 | info@shorerivers.org