



SB434

Natural Resources - Restorative Aquaculture Pilot Program
Testimony before House Environment and Transportation Committee
Hearing March 29, 2023
Position: Favorable

Dear Delegate Barve, Delegate Stein, and members of the committee, my name is Elizabeth Fixsen, and I represent the 700+ members of Indivisible Howard County. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony today **in support of SB434**, which would provide financial incentives to the Maryland shellfish aquaculture industry that would increase shellfish production, which in turn would contribute to the health of the Chesapeake Bay and of the industries dependent on the Bay.

Shellfish such as oysters are filter feeders that contribute to reducing excess nutrients, thus furthering restoration of the Chesapeake Bay. Oysters form large reef structures that support more than 300 other species, making it a keystone species in the Chesapeake Bay, providing a habitat for fish and blue crabs, which benefits commercial watermen and recreational fishers. The production of oysters through well-managed aquaculture benefits Maryland seafood consumers, supports small businesses, and generates regional economic impacts to coastal communities and economies.

Despite these benefits, shellfish production by the Maryland aquaculture industry is lower than what is socially optimal. By providing well-targeted financial incentives through a Restorative Aquaculture Pilot Program, Senate Bill 434 would help increase shellfish aquaculture production to a more optimal level that reflects both the private and public benefits of shellfish aquaculture.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

We respectfully urge a favorable report.

Elizabeth Fixsen
Savage, MD

Sources Cited:

<https://www.cbf.org/issues/fisheries/shellfish-aquaculture.html>

<https://www.mdsg.umd.edu/topics/oysters/oyster-aquaculture-and-restoration>