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RECREATIONAL ANGLERS FIGHTING FOR MARYLAND'S MARINE RESOURCES

March 6, 2015

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

Re: House Bill 998 Natural Resources – Striped Bass Permit – Annual Fees

CCA Maryland Position: UNFAVORABLE

CCA Maryland recommends an unfavorable report from the House Environmental & Transportation Committee on House Bill 998 as introduced.

In the 2012 session the General Assembly passed HB1372 which dealt with changes relating to the commercial fishing licenses, authorizations, fees, and surcharges paid by commercial fishing licensees. The main purpose of the bill was to increase the efficiency, flexibility and accountability in Maryland's commercial fishing license system, which was under performing in these areas. As such, one of its key goals was to set commercial licenses receipts at a level that would cover a fair and reasonable portion of the management and enforcement costs of the fishery. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) conducted an analysis to determine the costs of managing fisheries in each user sector and consulted with the Tidal Fisheries (TFAC) and Sport Fisheries (SFAC) Advisory Commissions. In total there were ten public Commission meetings to discuss the analysis and recommendations.

The changes made by HB1372 have helped the commercial fishery to get closer to the objective of having the costs of managing their fishery through user fees as opposed to General Fund appropriations.

It would be a step backwards to reduce these fees now to a "for profit" industry without meaningful justification, as well as, a plan to make up for the cost deficit. The quota for the entire Striped Bass fishery (both recreational and commercial) in the Chesapeake Bay will be reduced by 20% in 2015. Taking a reduction of 20% in the commercial license fees for striped Bass because of a quota reduction of 20% sets a bad precedent. The cost of the managing the fishery to DNR and the state does not change because the quota increases or decreases; therefore, the fees should not increase or decrease annually.

CCA Maryland strongly urges each member of the Committee to provide an **UNFAVORABLE** vote for HB 998.