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**RECREATIONAL ANGLERS
WORKING TO CONSERVE, PROMOTE, AND ENHANCE MARYLAND'S
MARINE RESOURCES**

March 7, 2018

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

Re: HB 1426 Natural Resources – Aquaculture Leases - Location

CCA Maryland Position: Oppose

CCA Maryland has consistently supported the expansion of aquaculture in Maryland and worked to help this body to implement the changes a decade ago that have led to the current growth occurring at this time.

Many aquaculture operations have succeeded, and grown quickly, even with the delays in processing applications, and challenges faced by evolving rules and regulations. Oyster farmers have worked hard to get started and become profitable businesses, growing a great product that has had both economic and ecological benefit to Maryland.

Oyster farming operations have found success by taking risks and expanding their leases to create place oysters in unproductive areas where oysters have not existed for decades. Doing this is a net gain for the overall oyster population, and many positive benefits for working waterfronts. Aquaculture operations provide important jobs, and their support of other local businesses have had multiplier effects for many communities.

This misguided bill would essentially eliminate leasing in most of the shallow water areas of the Bay, stifle growth, and risk putting many of our oyster growers out of business completely. Oyster farms support green jobs and provide a valuable seafood product, while oysters clean our waters, help expand growth of submerged aquatic vegetation. Proposals like HB1426 have zero benefit to our growing oyster industry or the Chesapeake Bay. After over a decade of hard work and investment by many, we can no afford to roll back the clock and stifle growth in oyster aquaculture at this time by placing draconian restrictions on the ability to lease more area.

CCA Maryland respectfully requests an UNFAVORABLE vote on HB 1426