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

3/3/2020

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

Re: House Bill 1353 Natural Resources – Oyster Severance Tax – Increase

CCA Maryland Position: OPPOSE

Coastal Conservation Association Maryland (CCAMD) opposes HB 1353 and requests an unfavorable vote.

The current one dollar per bushel oyster severance tax on oysters harvested from public shellfish areas is not paid by the waterman harvesting them but by the purchaser who passes the expense through the transaction to the ultimate consumer.

Thus it represents a tax on the consumer that is utilized to subsidize the public oyster fishery. Before considering increasing this tax on oyster consumers the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) should be required to file an annual detailed report as to exactly how these funds are spent, the results of the investment and the return on investment. Decisions as to how these funds are spent are decided by county oyster committees that are not appointed by DNR and are not accountable to the public for the use of public funds.

In contrast to the strict public accountability as to how public funds are spent on oyster restoration there is no detailed accountability as to how tax dollars are spent on the public oyster fishery.

Any audit of public fund expenditures on the public oyster fishery should include the Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program (Oyster Recovery) whereby The Maryland Department of Transportation provides an annual two million dollar grant to the Department of Natural Resources for oyster projects and mandates that half of the amount is spent on the wild harvest. There should also be an assessment as to the return on investment of these public funds.

For these reasons, we respectfully request an unfavorable vote on HB 1353