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(Original Signature of Member)

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. _____

To direct the Secretary of Commerce to establish a pilot program with respect to the sale of blue catfish caught within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. ELFRETH introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Commerce to establish a pilot program with respect to the sale of blue catfish caught within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Mitigation Action and Watermen Support Act of 2025'' or the ''MAWS Act of 2025''.

SEC. 2. BLUE CATFISH PILOT PROGRAM.

Section 307 of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Authorization Act of 1992 (15 U.S.C. 1511d) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsection (e) as subsection (f); and

(2) by inserting after subsection (d) the following:

''(e) BLUE CATFISH PILOT PROGRAM.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish a pilot program to award amounts to covered entities to purchase, in accordance with paragraph (3)—

''(A) from watermen, blue catfish caught within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed by such watermen; and

''(B) from seafood processors, such blue catfish purchased by seafood processors from such watermen.

''(2) APPLICATIONS.—To be eligible to be awarded amounts under the pilot program, a covered entity shall submit to the Secretary an application in such form, at such time, and containing such information as the Secretary determines appropriate.

''(3) USE OF AMOUNTS.—A covered entity that is awarded amounts under the pilot program—

''(A) shall use such amounts to purchase blue catfish from watermen or seafood processors for at least the amount determined by the Secretary under paragraph (5); and

''(B) may use not more than 15 percent of such amounts to offset the cost to transport such blue catfish to manufacturing or processing facilities.

''(4) WATERMAN AND SEAFOOD PROCESSOR ELIGIBILITY.—To be eligible to sell a blue catfish under the pilot program to a covered entity that is awarded amounts under the pilot program—

''(A) a waterman shall certify to such a covered entity that the waterman caught the blue catfish within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed; and

''(B) a seafood processor shall certify to such a covered entity that the seafood processor purchased the blue catfish from a waterman who caught the blue catfish within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

''(5) DETERMINATION OF MINIMUM PURCHASE AMOUNT.—With respect to blue catfish sold by watermen or seafood processors under the pilot pro-

gram, the Secretary shall determine the minimum price per pound, taking into consideration—

''(A) market factors;

''(B) feedback from watermen, seafood processors, and covered entities who participate in the pilot program, if available; and

''(C) differentiation of price points for fillet and byproduct.

''(6) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date on which the pilot program terminates in accordance with paragraph (7), the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report regarding the pilot program, including the following information:

''(A) An estimate of the size and spawning stock biomass of the blue catfish population in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed prior to and at the conclusion of the pilot program, using the most recent data available.

''(B) The size distribution and diet of the blue catfish population in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed during and at the conclusion of the pilot program.

''(C) The number of blue catfish and the amount of blue catfish (measured in pounds)

caught by watermen who participate in the pilot program during the pilot program.

''(D) The effect of the pilot program on species other than the blue catfish in and the environment of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

''(E) The economic effect of the pilot program on watermen who participate in the pilot program, including—

''(i) the revenue generated by each such waterman by selling blue catfish under the pilot program; and

''(ii) catch data with respect to and revenue generated from other species fished by such watermen during the pilot program.

''(F) The market response to the pilot program, including—

''(i) the total amount awarded to covered entities under the pilot program; and

''(ii) trends in the types of covered entities awarded amounts under the pilot program.

''(G) With respect to the manufacturing or processing practices of each covered entity that is awarded amounts under the pilot program,

information regarding whether each such covered entity—

''(i) uses internal or third-party manufacturers or processors;

''(ii) uses, for each type of food product produced by the covered entity, whole fish, fillet, or byproduct; and

''(iii) if the covered entity uses only part of the fish, sells the remainder to third parties.

''(H) How each covered entity that is awarded amounts under the pilot program transports blue catfish purchased by the covered entity, including—

''(i) whether the covered entity freezes such blue catfish;

''(ii) how often the covered entity picks up such blue catfish; and

''(iii) whether the covered entity uses a seafood transport company that is local to the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

''(I) Policy recommendations regarding—

''(i) the continuation of the pilot program in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed; and

''(ii) the expansion of the pilot program to other watersheds, including—

''(I) best practices;

''(II) specific recommendations regarding invasive species of carp in the Mississippi rivershed;

''(III) with respect to other invasive aquatic species and watersheds that may benefit from the pilot program; and

''(IV) other strategies with respect to the mitigation of aquatic invasive species for Congress to consider piloting.

''(7) DURATION.—The Secretary shall carry out the pilot program from January 1, 2027 through December 31, 2029.

''(8) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary to carry out the pilot program $2,000,000 for each fiscal year for the duration of the pilot program in accordance with paragraph (7).

''(9) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

''(A) ANIMAL FEED.—The term 'animal feed'—

''(i) means an article that is intended for use—

''(I) for food for an animal other than man; and

''(II) as a substantial source of nutrients in the diet of such an animal; and

''(ii) is not limited to a mixture intended to be the sole ration of such an animal.

''(B) AQUACULTURE FEED.—The term 'aquaculture feed'—

''(i) means an article that is intended for use—

''(I) for food for an aquacultural species, including any species of finfish, mollusk, crustacean (or other aquatic invertebrate), amphibian, reptile, ornamental fish, or aquatic plant that is propagated and reared in a controlled or selected environment; and

''(II) as a substantial source of nutrients in the diet of such an aquacultural species; and

"(ii) is not limited to a mixture intended to be the sole ration of such an aquacultural species.

"(C) BLUE CATFISH.—The term 'blue catfish' means the species *Ictalurus furcatus*.

"(D) CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERSHED.—The term 'Chesapeake Bay Watershed' means the region that covers—

"(i) the Chesapeake Bay;

"(ii) the portions of the States of Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia that drain into the Chesapeake Bay; and

"(iii) the District of Columbia.

"(E) COVERED ENTITY.—The term 'covered entity' means a person engaged in the business of manufacturing or processing—

"(i) pet food;

"(ii) animal feed; or

"(iii) aquaculture feed.

"(F) PILOT PROGRAM.—The term 'pilot program' means the pilot program established under paragraph (1).

"(G) SEAFOOD PROCESSOR.—The term 'seafood processor' means a person engaged in

the business of preparing or packaging fish or fish products (including fish harvested by the processor) for sale.

''(H) SECRETARY.—The term 'Secretary' means the Secretary of Commerce, acting through the Administrator of the National Oceans and Atmospheric Administration.''.