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**Committee: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs**

**Testimony on: SJ6 “Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission – Atlantic Menhaden – Prohibition on Commercial Reduction Fishing”**

**Position: Support**

**Hearing Date: March 1, 2022**

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club urges a favorable report on SJ6. This resolution asks the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to exercise its authority regarding the management of the menhaden fishery to consider prohibiting commercial reduction fishing of Atlantic menhaden, including the use of purse seines and spotter planes, in the Chesapeake Bay.

Atlantic menhaden are a keystone species for the Chesapeake Bay. As noted by this resolution, Atlantic menhaden form a critical connection between the bottom and the top of the food chain. Menhaden are filter feeders, eating plankton and rotifers and helping clear the water of nutrient-pollution.<sup>1</sup> They are also a vital source of food to predators, including predatory fish, dolphins, whales, osprey, and bald eagles. While this is incredibly important to the ecosystem of the Bay, it is also important to the fishing industry. Many species of fish that we harvest from the Bay rely on the menhaden as a food source, including rockfish (striped bass), bluefish, and weakfish.

The Chesapeake Bay is an important nursery for the menhaden that helps sustain the population along the entire Atlantic coast. It is deeply concerning that the number of menhaden juveniles have decreased significantly since 1976 and has stayed low in the last 20 years.<sup>2</sup>

In order to protect the natural wonders of the Chesapeake Bay, it is important that action be taken now. We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.vims.edu/research/units/projects/menhaden/research/modeling.php>

<sup>2</sup> Durrell, E. Q. & Weedon, C. (2019). Striped Bass Seine Survey Juvenile Index Web Page.

DNR.Maryland.gov/Fisheries/Pages/Juvenile-Index.ASPX. Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Fisheries Service.

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.