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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.

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**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.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2       *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3       **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4       This Act may be cited as the “Mitigation Action and  
5       Watermen Support Act of 2025” or the “MAWS Act of  
6       2025”.

1 **SEC. 2. BLUE CATFISH PILOT PROGRAM.**

2 Section 307 of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric  
3 Administration Authorization Act of 1992 (15 U.S.C.  
4 1511d) is amended—

5 (1) by redesignating subsection (e) as sub-  
6 section (f); and

7 (2) by inserting after subsection (d) the fol-  
8 lowing:

9 “(e) BLUE CATFISH PILOT PROGRAM.—

10 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall estab-  
11 lish a pilot program to award amounts to covered  
12 entities to purchase from watermen in accordance  
13 with paragraph (3) blue catfish caught within the  
14 Chesapeake Bay Watershed by such watermen.

15 “(2) APPLICATIONS.—To be eligible to be  
16 awarded amounts under the pilot program, a covered  
17 entity shall submit to the Secretary an application in  
18 such form, at such time, and containing such infor-  
19 mation as the Secretary determines appropriate.

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

22 “(A) shall use such amounts to purchase  
23 blue catfish from watermen for at least the  
24 amount determined by the Secretary under  
25 paragraph (5);

1           “(B) may use not more than 15 percent of  
2           such amounts to offset the cost to transport  
3           such blue catfish to manufacturing or proc-  
4           essing facilities; and

5           “(C) with respect to blue catfish purchased  
6           with such amounts, may only sell or otherwise  
7           use such blue catfish for manufacturing or  
8           processing into products not for human con-  
9           sumption.

10          “(4) WATERMEN ELIGIBILITY.—To be eligible  
11          to sell a blue catfish under the pilot program to a  
12          covered entity that is awarded amounts under the  
13          pilot program, a waterman shall certify to such a  
14          covered entity that the waterman caught the blue  
15          catfish within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

16          “(5) DETERMINATION OF MINIMUM PURCHASE  
17          AMOUNT.—With respect to blue catfish sold by  
18          watermen under the pilot program, the Secretary  
19          shall determine the minimum price per pound, tak-  
20          ing into consideration—

21                 “(A) market factors;

22                 “(B) feedback from watermen and covered  
23                 entities who participate in the pilot program, if  
24                 available; and

25                 “(C) geographic variation.

1           “(6) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after  
2           the date on which the pilot program terminates in  
3           accordance with paragraph (7), the Secretary shall  
4           submit to Congress a report regarding the pilot pro-  
5           gram, including the following information:

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

11                  “(B) The size distribution and diet of the  
12                  blue catfish population in the Chesapeake Bay  
13                  Watershed during and at the conclusion of the  
14                  pilot program.

15                  “(C) The number of blue catfish and the  
16                  amount of blue catfish (measured in pounds)  
17                  caught during the pilot program.

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

21                  “(E) The economic effect of the pilot pro-  
22                  gram on watermen who participate in the pilot  
23                  program, including—

1 “(i) the revenue generated by each  
2 such waterman by selling blue catfish  
3 under the pilot program; and

4 “(ii) catch data with respect to and  
5 revenue generated from other species  
6 fished by such watermen during the pilot  
7 program.

8 “(F) The market response to the pilot pro-  
9 gram, including—

10 “(i) the total amount awarded to cov-  
11 ered entities under the pilot program; and

12 “(ii) trends in the types of covered en-  
13 tities awarded amounts under the pilot  
14 program.

15 “(G) With respect to the manufacturing or  
16 processing practices of each covered entity that  
17 is awarded amounts under the pilot program,  
18 information regarding whether each such cov-  
19 ered entity—

20 “(i) uses internal or third-party man-  
21 ufacturers or processors;

22 “(ii) uses, for each type of food prod-  
23 uct produced by the covered entity, whole  
24 fish, fillet, or byproduct; and

1                   “(iii) if the covered entity uses only  
2                   fillet, sells byproduct to third parties.

3                   “(H) How each covered entity that is  
4                   awarded amounts under the pilot program  
5                   transports blue catfish purchased by the cov-  
6                   ered entity, including—

7                   “(i) whether the covered entity freezes  
8                   such blue catfish;

9                   “(ii) how often the covered entity  
10                  picks up such blue catfish; and

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

14                  “(I) Policy recommendations regarding—

15                  “(i) the continuation of the pilot pro-  
16                  gram in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed;  
17                  and

18                  “(ii) the expansion of the pilot pro-  
19                  gram to other watersheds, including—

20                  “(I) best practices;

21                  “(II) specific recommendations  
22                  regarding invasive species of carp in  
23                  the Mississippi rivershed;

24                  “(III) with respect to other  
25                  invasive aquatic species and water-

1 sheds that may benefit from the pilot  
2 program; and

3 “(IV) other strategies with re-  
4 spect to the mitigation of aquatic  
5 invasive species for Congress to con-  
6 sider piloting.

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

10 “(8) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—  
11 There are authorized to be appropriated to the Sec-  
12 retary to carry out the pilot program \$2,000,000 for  
13 each fiscal year for the duration of the pilot program  
14 in accordance with paragraph (7).

15 “(9) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

16 “(A) ANIMAL FEED.—The term ‘animal  
17 feed’—

18 “(i) means an article that is intended  
19 for use—

20 “(I) for food for an animal other  
21 than man; and

22 “(II) as a substantial source of  
23 nutrients in the diet of such an ani-  
24 mal; and

1 “(ii) is not limited to a mixture in-  
2 tended to be the sole ration of such an ani-  
3 mal.

4 “(B) AQUACULTURE FEED.—The term  
5 ‘aquaculture feed’—

6 “(i) means an article that is intended  
7 for use—

8 “(I) for food for an aquacultural  
9 species, including any species of  
10 finfish, mollusk, crustacean (or other  
11 aquatic invertebrate), amphibian, rep-  
12 tile, ornamental fish, or aquatic plant  
13 that is propagated and reared in a  
14 controlled or selected environment;  
15 and

16 “(II) as a substantial source of  
17 nutrients in the diet of such an  
18 aquacultural species; and

19 “(ii) is not limited to a mixture in-  
20 tended to be the sole ration of such an  
21 aquacultural species.

22 “(C) BLUE CATFISH.—The term ‘blue cat-  
23 fish’ means the species *Ictalurus furcatus*.



1 “(D) CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERSHED.—

2 The term ‘Chesapeake Bay Watershed’ means  
3 the region that covers—

4 “(i) the Chesapeake Bay;

5 “(ii) the portions of the States of  
6 Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsyl-  
7 vania, Virginia, and West Virginia that  
8 drain into the Chesapeake Bay; and

9 “(iii) the District of Columbia.

10 “(E) COVERED ENTITY.—The term ‘cov-  
11 ered entity’ means a person engaged in the  
12 business of manufacturing or processing—

13 “(i) pet food;

14 “(ii) animal feed; or

15 “(iii) aquaculture feed.

16 “(F) PILOT PROGRAM.—The term ‘pilot  
17 program’ means the pilot program established  
18 under paragraph (1).

19 “(G) SECRETARY.—The term ‘Secretary’  
20 means the Secretary of Commerce, acting  
21 through the Administrator of the National  
22 Oceans and Atmospheric Administration.”.