

WHEREAS, The Maryland economy and that of the entire region depend on a balanced and healthy Bay ecosystem; and

WHEREAS, The continued ecological and economic productivity of the Bay depends upon sound, science-based management decisions; and

WHEREAS, Various government resource management agencies are now considering the introduction of a nonnative oyster species, *Crassostrea ariakensis*, into the waters of the Chesapeake Bay, and recent indications are that this introduction may occur in Maryland as soon as the current calendar year; and

WHEREAS, Several independent fishery experts who speak with great authority in the scientific community, most notably the National Research Council of the National Academies of Science and the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee of the federal Chesapeake Bay Program, have concluded that, at this time, there is insufficient scientific evidence upon which to base a decision to introduce this nonnative oyster species or even to expect that such an introduction would yield a positive net benefit; and

WHEREAS, These experts advise that additional research is absolutely necessary in order to ascertain a basic working knowledge of this species and its likely ecological impact on the Bay and the entire East Coast; and

WHEREAS, A most significant factor about which little data exists is the likely impact of this species on the already vulnerable native oyster population; and

WHEREAS, Among the most elementary characteristics of this species about which little is now certain are: reproductive capabilities; larval behaviors that would indicate potential dispersal patterns and susceptibility to predation; the ability to build reefs or deal with limitations such as lack of habitat, competition for space, poor water quality, and high sedimentation rates; and susceptibility to disease; and

WHEREAS, It is apparent that introduction of a nonnative oyster would be premature without the additional research advocated by the National Research Council and the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee; and

WHEREAS, Such an introduction carries ~~major risk of far reaching and irreversible ecological and economic harm~~ a risk of irreversible ecological and economic impacts; and

WHEREAS, Because of the critical nature and potentially grave impact of a decision to introduce a nonnative oyster into the Bay ecosystem, this decision is best made in the context of widespread public notice and participation by the citizens of Maryland; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That Section(s) 4-1008 of Article - Natural Resources of the Annotated Code of Maryland be renumbered to be Section(s) 4-1008.1.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows: