

1 HOUSE BILL NO. 1135

2 AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

3 (Proposed by the House Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources
4 on January 29, 2024)

5 (Patron Prior to Substitute--Delegate Hodges)

6 A BILL to direct the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to convene a work group relating
7 to blue catfish; report.

8 **Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

9 1. § 1. That the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (the Department) shall, in order to
10 support and encourage coordination regarding efforts to create a robust and resilient market for blue
11 catfish, convene a work group of stakeholders that have a vested interest in reducing the negative
12 ecological effects of blue catfish and increasing the marketing, processing, and sale of blue catfish in the
13 Commonwealth. The work group shall include representatives of the following: the Marine Resources
14 Commission, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Education, the James River Association,
15 the Virginia Seafood Agricultural Research and Extension Center, the Marine Products Board, the
16 Virginia Institute of Marine Science, the Virginia Waterman's Association, the Virginia Restaurant,
17 Lodging & Travel Association, current and prospective blue catfish processors, Friends of the
18 Rappahannock, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and other state agencies or stakeholders deemed
19 necessary by the Department. The work group shall (i) review past and ongoing efforts to promote the
20 creation of a market for blue catfish, (ii) identify and explore potential sectors for the blue catfish market,
21 and (iii) identify any actions that the Commonwealth can take to promote and expand the market for blue
22 catfish. The Department shall submit a report of the findings and recommendations of the work group to
23 the Governor, the Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources,
24 and the Chairs of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources, the Senate
25 Committee on Finance and Appropriations, the House Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural
26 Resources, and the House Committee on Appropriations no later than September 1, 2025.

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