

HOUSE BILL NO. 1135

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

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

(Patron Prior to Substitute--Delegate Hodges)

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

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

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

27

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