

William White MacKay
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My name is William MacKay and I am writing in support of House bills 5720, 5722, and Senate bill 357. I am currently in the process of applying to start my own oyster farm in Stonington, CT and have spent the past 2 years shadowing Steve Plant and Jim Markow at the Noank COOP to learn more about the shellfish industry here in CT.

H.B. No. 5720

Currently, there is only one lab in CT that is approved for shellfish testing and this lab is located in Milford, CT. Increasing the amount of labs capable of performing these shellfish tests will ensure that: CT remains current in her obligations to Federal NSSP requirements; provide possible educational benefits; allow access to other groups such as non-profits to water testing that would otherwise be too expensive; and most important to myself it will allow the growth of shellfish aquaculture in CT. The area I am looking to lease from the town of CT is in restricted relay and I have been told by the DA/BA that they will not be able to establish testing sights due to budget issues. Without a water testing sight, I cannot begin to gather data that I hope will allow me to appeal this areas water quality classification and change it to conditionally approved for the winter months. If the state is unable to increase the capacity of shellfish sampling in CT, the growth of shellfish aquaculture will be severely limited.

H.B. No. 5722

Cultured oysters are a farmed product no different from tomatoes, chickens or pigs. These oysters are artificially spawned in hatcheries and delivered to farmers in various sizes to be further grown out and planted. As far as I am aware, there are no laws in this country concerning when or at what size you are allowed to harvest a tomato or a pig; that is up to the farmer and his customers to decide. Smaller oysters are what the market demands and the DA/BA's application of the current statute prevents farmers from providing them to market. I fully understand and support size limits on wild oysters because it is vitally important to protect the wild brood stock of oysters; however, cultured oysters should be exempt from this size limit because they are a farmed, not wild, product.

S.B. No. 357

I strongly believe that the formation of the Aquaculture Coordinating Council is vital to the growth and long term success of Aquaculture in Connecticut. This council will shine a light into the DA/BA and expose the dysfunction that is currently hindering the growth and success of the Connecticut shellfish industry.

Sincerely,

William White MacKay