

# SUPPORT SB 474

Topic: Establishment of the Atlantic Menhaden Research Fund

Bill Patron: Senator David Marsden (D-35)

## OVERVIEW:

Senate Bill 474 would establish the Atlantic Menhaden Research Fund to be used by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS), in collaboration with Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) and relevant stakeholders, to produce research relating to Atlantic menhaden necessary to inform a scientifically defensible and ecologically meaningful harvest limit for Atlantic menhaden in Chesapeake Bay. In undertaking this effort, VIMS may be guided by the previously developed Atlantic Menhaden Research Planning report and the forthcoming Science Center for the Marine Fisheries research roadmap.

## REASONS TO SUPPORT:

- Menhaden are forage fish that nourish striped bass, bluefish, summer flounder, and other popular fish targeted by commercial and recreational fishing industries, as well as bird species like osprey.
- A 2025 coastwide menhaden stock assessment found the population was nearly 40% smaller than previous assessments.
- Throughout the saltier regions of the Bay, osprey chicks are starving at unprecedented rates, driven in part by a troubling shortage of menhaden—their primary food source.
- A healthy menhaden population benefits both ecological and economic interests throughout the Bay region.
- The reduction industry has repeatedly blocked new Chesapeake Bay menhaden research, leaving current information on the fishery woefully outdated and inadequate, according to the Virginia Institute of Marine Science.
- Climate change is rapidly changing the makeup, abundance, and migratory patterns of fish species in the Chesapeake Bay region. This effort is needed to ensure the best available science is used in managing this important resource.



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This position was taken by Virginia Conservation Network (VCN)'s Legislative Committee and Board of Directors and is supported by Virginia's conservation community. For a complete list of VCN positions, visit [www.vcnva.org/bill-tracker](http://www.vcnva.org/bill-tracker). VCN is committed to building a powerful, diverse, and highly-coordinated conservation movement focused on protecting our Commonwealth's natural resources today and for tomorrow.