



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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November 3, 2015

Senator Emmett W. Hanger, Jr
Chair Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources

Dear Senator Hanger,

The Virginia Marine Products Board (VMPB) was asked to do a study in regards to Senate Bill 1419 pertaining to doing a marketing program for blue crab meat similar to the True Blue Program in Maryland. In regards to doing a program it would require major funds which at this time the VMPB has very limited funds and would need help and support with funds to do a marketing program like the True Blue Program in Maryland. In talking with some Virginia processors they feel like the True Blue Program does not stop the mislabeling of crabmeat and there is nothing in place to show how it is enforced.

In April 2015 the conservation group Oceana finds that your tasty Maryland crab cake isn't safe from seafood fraud. In the report 38% of Maryland crab cakes the group tested contained imported crab from places as far away as Indonesia and Thailand instead of Maryland crab. Nearly half of the crab cakes found in Annapolis and Baltimore were mislabeled and some were registered with the True Blue program. This is why it would be hard to do a True Blue program unless you have an enforceable program in place and then who is going to do the inspections and enforcing.

The VMPB could do a major marketing plan for Virginia Blue Crab meat if the funds were available. Some of the Virginia industry support and some do not support such a program. Issues like mentioned above that happened in Maryland are a concern in regards to such a program. The VMPB continues to market Virginia crabmeat at all trade shows and marketing events that we participate in. The VMPB would look into any possibilities to get funding to help support a program that would have merit and value to the Virginia blue crab industry.

Sincerely yours,

Handwritten signature of Mike Hutt in black ink.

Mike Hutt

Cc: Senator Jeffery L. McWaters, Parton of SB 1419
Marty Farber, Division of Legislative Services
Scott Meacham, Division of Legislative Services
Susan Clarke Schaar, Clerk of the Senate

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