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The Honorable Rebecca Rausch, Senate Chair
The Honorable Christine Barber, House Chair
Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
State House
24 Beacon St.
Boston, MA 02133

Support for H.898 – An Act to End the Taking of Horseshoe Crabs for Bait

Dear Chair Rausch, Chair Barber and Members of the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources:

The Association to Preserve Cape Cod (APCC) writes in strong support for An Act to End the Taking of Horseshoe Crabs for Bait (H.898), which would prohibit the harvesting of horseshoe crabs for use as bait in commercial fishing in Massachusetts. We respectfully ask the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources to report this bill out with a favorable recommendation.

Founded in 1968, APCC is the Cape region's leading nonprofit environmental advocacy and education organization, working for the adoption of laws, policies and programs that protect, preserve and restore Cape Cod's natural resources. APCC focuses our efforts on the protection of groundwater, surface water, and wetland resources, preservation of open space, the promotion of responsible, planned growth and the achievement of an environmental ethic.

Horseshoe crabs perform an essential role in medical science, where their unique blood is indispensable for endotoxin testing that ensures the safety of medical products and vaccines. Horseshoe crabs also play a critical role in coastal ecosystems. Their eggs are a vital food source for local and migratory shorebirds, as well as for many other important marine species.

Despite their scientific and ecological importance, horseshoe crab populations have plummeted to dangerously low levels in recent decades due in part to commercial bait harvesting for the whelk and eel fisheries. This decline has significant consequences for the entire ecosystem, including many commercially important fish and shellfish species. Their use as bait is both unnecessary and unsustainable. There are other available and more advantageous bait sources, such as the invasive green crab, which

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are abundant in Massachusetts waters and which have adversely impacted the shellfish industry.

H.898 targets the outdated and unsustainable practice of harvesting horseshoe crabs for low-value bait but it does not restrict biomedical use. By ending bait harvest, the bill protects an ecologically and medically critical species and, at the same time, supports the long-term health of fisheries and coastal biodiversity. Similar policies have already been successfully adopted in New Jersey and Connecticut, and other coastal states are currently working on actions to protect horseshoe crabs.

With the biomedical industry beginning to transition away from the use of horseshoe crab blood to other synthetic alternatives, the time is right to halt the use of horseshoe crabs as an unnecessary bait product. We urge the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources to support H.898 and to act swiftly in reporting this bill out of committee.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Andrew Gottlieb
Executive Director

cc: The Honorable Julian Cyr
 The Honorable Dylan Fernandes
 The Honorable Hadley Luddy
 The Honorable Christopher Flanagan
 The Honorable Kip Diggs
 The Honorable David Vieira
 The Honorable Thomas Moakley
 The Honorable Steven Xiarhos

