Department of Planning and Budget
2026 General Assembly Session
State Fiscal Impact Statement

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Bill Number: HB521 **Patron:** Hernandez
Bill Title: Marine Resources Commission; powers and duties, wetlands, report.

Bill Summary: Requires the Marine Resources Commission to ensure that, in promulgating minimum standards for protection and conservation of wetlands, no net loss of existing wetland acreage and functions is achieved. The bill requires permits for the use and development of wetlands to contain requirements for compensating impacts on wetlands sufficient to achieve no net loss of existing wetland acreage and functions. The bill also directs the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources to convene a stakeholder work group to address mitigation requirements for tidal nonvegetated wetlands and directs the work group to submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the Chairs of the House Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources and the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources no later than December 1, 2026.

Budget Amendment Necessary: No **Items Impacted:** N/A
Explanation: This bill involves the Marine Resources Commission (MRC); however, no budget action is required. See Fiscal Analysis section, below.

Fiscal Summary: It is anticipated that this bill may result in an increase in workload for MRC, the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources (the Secretary), and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), which can be absorbed within existing resources.

Fiscal Analysis: This impact statement is preliminary. This bill requires MRC to promulgate and update standards and guidelines to achieve no net loss of wetland acreage and functions. It also tasks the Secretary with convening a stakeholder work group, including MRC and the Department of Environmental Quality, to address mitigation requirements for tidal nonvegetated wetlands, and directs the work group to submit a report of its findings no later than December 1, 2026. Additional stakeholders, including state agencies, may be added by the Secretary to the workgroup. The Commission estimates that participation in this work group will require approximately 192 to 384 hours of staff time. It is anticipated that any impact to state agencies associated with participating in the work group can be absorbed within existing resources.

Other: None.