The Honorable Joan Carter Conway  
Chair, Education, Health and Environmental Affairs  
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 West  
Annapolis, MD 21401  

March 22, 2017  

Dear Senator Conway:  

On behalf of the American Canoe Association, I respectfully request that you reconsider the wording of SB1147 which adds section 8-738.3 to Maryland Code, Natural Resources.  

Since our founding in 1880, the ACA has grown into the nation’s largest and most active nonprofit paddlesports organization with over 30,000 members and over 300 Clubs and Affiliates across the United States and abroad. We serve the canoe, kayak, raft and paddleboard communities by providing education related to all aspects of paddling, stewardship of paddling environments, sanctioning of programs and events and by promoting on-water safety.  

Clearly, SB1147 was written with the intent of improving on-water safety by banning certain unsafe activities. However, the bill is so broadly written that it could be interpreted to limit activities beyond that intent. For example, several forms of sailboat racing involve “hiking-out” to gain speed yet keep the boat from tipping over. SB1147 could be interpreted to drastically limit this very popular Maryland sport. One could even interpret SB1147 to preclude riding on the side pontoons of white-water rafts such as is popular on the Upper Youghiogheny in Maryland ([http://wilderness-voyageurs.com/adventures/upper-yough-rafting/#](http://wilderness-voyageurs.com/adventures/upper-yough-rafting/#)).  

Please consider rewording or withdrawing SB1147. Section 8-738.2 of Maryland Code, Natural Resources states “a person may not operate a vessel recklessly or in a manner that may endanger another.” We suggest that this existing statement
provides a directive sufficient to accomplish your objective. Alternatively, please consider enhancing language related to passengers riding in safe positions in powerboats while underway.

We appreciate your considering our request.

Sincerely,

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