

Submitter: Gina Mayonado

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3580

I am writing to express my strong support for HB 3580, the Eelgrass Action Bill. Eelgrass meadows are vital ecosystems that provide essential services to our coastal environment and economy. These meadows act as nurseries for juvenile fish, including critical species like salmon, herring, and various shellfish. These species are not only important to the health of our marine environment but are also central to our coastal economy, supporting commercial and recreational fishing industries.

In addition to supporting fish and shellfish populations, eelgrass meadows also contribute significantly to biodiversity. They serve as a habitat for migratory birds, such as the Black Brant, which rely on these areas for food and shelter. The loss of eelgrass would have far-reaching impacts on these species and the overall health of our coastal ecosystems.

Beyond their ecological value, eelgrass meadows have an important role in mitigating climate change. Eelgrass can sequester carbon at a rate faster than many terrestrial habitats, making it a key player in efforts to address rising atmospheric CO2 levels. Furthermore, eelgrass improves water quality by stabilizing sediments and filtering excess nutrients, which helps maintain the health of our coastal waters.

Unfortunately, eelgrass is currently in decline, but we do not fully understand the reasons behind this troubling trend. The lack of clear answers makes it all the more critical that we take proactive steps to protect and restore eelgrass meadows before irreversible damage is done.

HB 3580 provides a crucial framework for addressing this issue. By establishing a Taskforce to set conservation targets, assess monitoring programs, and evaluate policy barriers, this bill ensures that the conservation of eelgrass will be a collaborative effort involving a broad range of stakeholders, including agencies, Tribes, scientists, and local communities. It offers a comprehensive approach that is needed to safeguard this invaluable resource for future generations.

I urge you to support the passage of HB 3580. This bill will ensure that we have the necessary tools, resources, and collaboration to protect and restore eelgrass meadows, benefiting both our coastal ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.

Thank you for your time and consideration.