



Bonanza!
of KIMBALL HOUSE

KIMBALL HOUSE

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03.15.19

My name is Bryan Rackley, and I am an owner/operator/shellfish manager of Kimball House in Decatur, GA and Watchman's Seafood & Spirits in Atlanta. I am also a founding board member of Oyster South which is a 501(c)3 regional nonprofit that raises awareness and grant money for the southern aquacultural industry. Our two restaurants are among many in our market that have a strong focus on oysters and both sell roughly 250,000 annually. We have sold millions of oysters over the past six years, however only a few thousand of those were raised in Georgia. We now have access to beautiful farmed oysters from Louisiana, Alabama, Florida, both Carolinas, and Mississippi is not far behind. The future for southern aquaculture is blinding at this point with the exception of the state of Georgia. If potential farmers, distributors, restaurants or the dining public at large expect to see this industry succeed in Georgia, I would encourage them to oppose HB501 until its language has been amended. The regulation in HB501 is often ambiguous if not completely arbitrary, and does not explicitly describe an industry that a farmer would risk any sort of investment on. In short, HB501 is prohibitive, and will discourage the kind of natural growth that the industry will require to be successful.

The good news is that the divisive differences between the bill that Rep. Jones issued and the current one should not be that difficult to resolve. HB501 needs to clarify more definitively issues regarding floating equipment. Without it the industry is hamstrung from the start. Floating gear exponentially increases the efficiency of farming on soft bottom substrates and deep-water leases. The year round harvest season is also essential to an oyster farmer's economic success. How many school teachers would we have if govt. decided not to pay them during summer? The DNR should absolutely reserve the right the force temporary closures if the safety of the public is in jeopardy, but this again can be easily resolved with better regulation. The requirements that this Bill requires for summer harvest are prohibitive, and are the type of plans that the DNR themselves should be responsible for. The lottery is arbitrary at best, and will impede a potential farmer's ability to seek and gain investment. The current legislation could benefit greatly from information regarding the industry's precedence, success and failures in neighboring states. A committee of industry professionals is also vital to the future of the industry and in the event that this bill needs rapid amendments. Without these modifications, I have serious doubts about aquaculture's viability in the state of Georgia and thus cannot support HB

501 until these changes are considered and an adequate response has been issued.

As I previously mentioned, I don't think there's that much preventing these two sides from being on the same team, and it's unfortunate that an industry that so many are hopeful to be a part of has become part of a power struggle. Please consider this information I present as honest and reliable. There are not too many days that go by that I don't talk to an oyster farmer. I would like for more of those conversations to be with Georgians. I've also learned much about the industry through those relationships and have accrued enough information to know that the negative issues in the bill are indicative that the authors of this legislation don't know that much about oyster farming. I'm not suggesting they are bad people, but incorporating feedback from a source that is closer to the industry would go a long way towards making potential farmers feel like they have the support of the state.

Sincerely,

Bryan T. Rackley

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bryan T. Rackley', written over the typed name.

Kimball House
Wacthman's Seafood & Spirits
Oyster South