

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

June 24, 2024

Principals' Staff Committee
Chesapeake Bay Program
1750 Forest Drive
Suite 130
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Principals' Staff Committee:

As Members of Congress with an interest in the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed, we write today to express our support for planning efforts underway to chart a course for the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership beyond the year 2025. The 2014 Watershed Agreement includes 10 goals and 31 outcomes, some of which have targeted completion dates of 2025. While a majority of these outcomes are likely to be met by this deadline, some will not be realized. We are at a critical juncture with the opportunity to apply our learned experience to establish a framework for continued success in light of new science and improved understanding of the ecosystems, economies and people impacted. For that reason, we encourage the Principals' Staff Committee to set an agenda to ensure that the Chesapeake Executive Council remains aligned and fully committed to the shared goals of preserving and restoring the Chesapeake Bay, its tributaries and the watershed lands that feed them.

We appreciate the efforts of the Beyond 2025 Steering Committee, which is charged with the development of recommendations for what should come next in the restoration effort. By evaluating the progress to date and identifying which activities and policies have worked well and which could be improved, the Steering Committee plays an essential role informing the next phase of watershed restoration.

The Watershed Agreement and the Chesapeake Bay Program, which coordinates and supports much of the Agreement's work, brings together federal, state and local governments and stakeholders, setting a national example of collaboration. Each of the seven watershed jurisdictions of Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia has unique needs and constituencies and has brought varied strengths and resources to the shared work of restoring the watershed which is home to more than 18 million people.

With so much at stake, we urge the signatories of the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement to affirm their continuing commitment at this December's Executive Council Meeting to the partnership and ultimate goal of that Agreement – to restore the Bay and its watershed for the benefit of all its residents. In addition, it is imperative that the signatories evaluate, amend and recommit to the Agreement by the end of 2025 to build on four decades of

progress by strategically and expeditiously updating specific goals and outcomes to reflect the current, best available science. We also view this as an opportunity to streamline the partnership structure and make it as efficient and effective as possible. We trust that this holistic revision will:

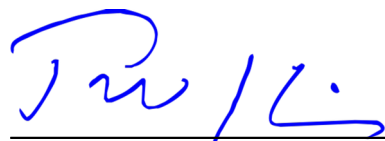
- **Be well informed** by public input, scientific and ecological expertise and suggestions from the partnership's three existing Advisory Committees and various stakeholders who work every day to carry out the Watershed Agreement;
- **Streamline the structure of the Chesapeake Bay Program** to maximize the financial and technical resources provided to jurisdictions while optimizing the efficiency of essential coordination between participants;
- **Include strong restoration commitments** from each participant to meet clean water goals as defined in the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) while also elevating the importance of living resource restoration and associated outcomes, as indicated in Section 117 of the Clean Water Act;
- **Reflect the importance of all corners of the watershed**, understanding that, while all partners share a common goal of a restored Chesapeake Bay, each brings unique perspectives and specific priorities, including priorities related to the health of tributaries and lands throughout the region; and
- **Recognize successes as well as opportunities for improvement**, as some participants have made significant progress toward certain goals and some participants will require targeted resources and technical assistance to meet desired outcomes.

Anticipating continued robust collaboration on all fronts, the watershed delegation remains committed to ensuring that the partnership has the appropriate resources for its critical work. In addition to record funding levels in recent years, there is an effort in Congress to increase the Chesapeake Bay Program authorization to \$100 million annually. Our continued support of the Program's work is a reflection of the bipartisan buy-in from all watershed jurisdictions and the federal government itself. Maintaining a unified partnership between these stakeholders is critical not only to the efficacy of any Watershed Agreement, but also to Congress's ability to continue to provide strong financial support. Our efforts to restore the Chesapeake watershed and Bay are stronger together than they are separate. We stand ready to provide robust support for an aligned and updated Watershed Agreement to capitalize on the momentum we have built together.

Sincerely,



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress



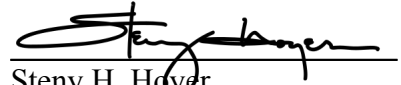
Robert J. Wittman
Member of Congress



John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress



Andy Harris, M.D.
Member of Congress



Steny H. Hoyer
Member of Congress



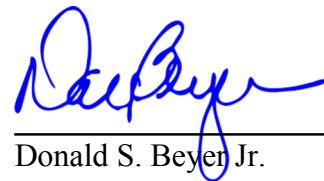
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



C. A. Dutch Ruppertsberger
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



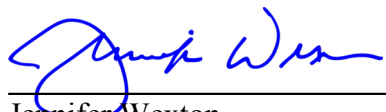
Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress



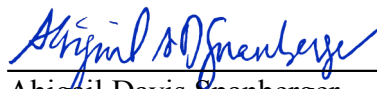
Jen A. Kiggans
Member of Congress



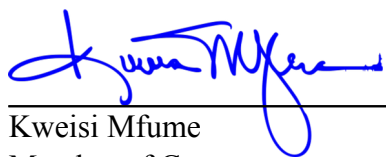
David J. Trone
Member of Congress



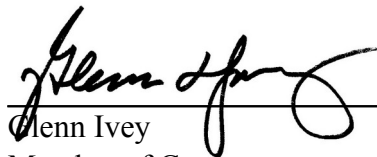
Jennifer Wexton
Member of Congress



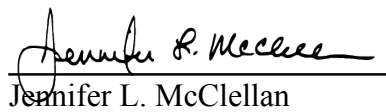
Abigail Davis Spanberger
Member of Congress



Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



Glenn Ivey
Member of Congress



Jennifer L. McClellan
Member of Congress