



Citizens Advisory Committee

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March 7, 2016

Honorable Terence R. McAuliffe
Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of the Governor
Chair, Chesapeake Executive Council
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor McAuliffe:

We are writing to thank and commend you for your leadership in facilitating the planned April 20, 2016 environmental literacy meeting between senior officials of the U.S. Department of Education and superintendents of schools from Chesapeake watershed states.

The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) has long believed that an educated and engaged citizenry is absolutely essential to the long-term success of the Chesapeake watershed restoration effort and that increased investments and commitments must be made to advance the environmental literacy of our next generation. The recent enactment of the Every Student Succeeds Act, with its new environmental education provisions contained in Title IV, its strong focus on STEM and math/science partnerships, and many other formula and competitive assistance grants, offers a tremendous opportunity for State and Local education agencies alike in the watershed to access additional Federal financial resources to help integrate environmental education and meaningful watershed educational experiences into the formal pre-K-12 curriculum. We hope that this meeting will lead to a more formal agreement and commitment by the U.S. Department of Education to collaborate with the watershed states to achieve Chesapeake Watershed Agreement environmental literacy goals and help strengthen partnerships and coordination with the Federal, State and Local Departments of Education.

We also hope that the Executive Council will continue to advocate with Congress and the Administration to support NOAA's Bay Watershed Education and Training (BWET) Program – a principal source of environmental education and meaningful watershed experience funding. Over the past fourteen years since it was first established, the BWET program has enabled State and local education and natural resource agencies and their non-profit partners to provide K-12 environmental and outdoor experiential education opportunities to more than 600,000 students and training for almost 20,000 teachers.



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These competitive grants have helped to: increase student interest and achievement in STEM subjects; get kids outside moving and learning in nature; enrich the educational experiences of students in underserved communities; prepare students for careers in science and the emerging green jobs economy, and promote environmental stewardship. Unfortunately, the President's Fiscal 2017 budget request, once again, proposes to terminate this highly successful program.

Your attention to this matter is greatly appreciate and again, we comment you for your strong commitment to environmental literacy in the Chesapeake watershed.

Sincerely,



Charles A. Stek
Chair, Citizens Advisory Committee



Paula Jasinski
Vice-Chair, Citizens Advisory Committee

cc: Chesapeake Executive Council
John King, U.S. Department of Education, Acting Secretary of Education