

Mr. Nicholas DiPasquale

Chair, Chesapeake Bay Program Management Board

410 Severn Avenue, Suite 109

Annapolis, MD 21403

Re: Draft Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement-Comments from the Maryland Environmental Justice and Environmental Education Community

Dear Mr. DiPasquale and Management Board Members:

Thank you for your commitment to restore the Chesapeake Bay and protect the health of its communities. I understand the current Chesapeake Bay Agreement forges a partnership between Governors and the Mayor of the District of Columbia, the Chesapeake Bay Commission, the U.S. E.P.A., and other important partners to help restore the Bay. It also sets voluntary goals and outcomes for this partnership. Therefore, the details of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement may have an impact on the health of my community. For this reason, I am submitting comments for the new draft the Chesapeake Bay Agreement being prepared by your organization.

Environmental Justice

Goal: The Chesapeake Bay Agreement does an honorable job at laying the ground work for restoring the natural environment in the region. However, it is silent on the conditions of the built and urban environment. Urban blight is a physical and environmental condition often linked to environmental justice issues in urban communities like Baltimore, Philadelphia, Prince George's County, and Washington D.C. It should not be left out of any regional environmental policy. More specifically, the Chesapeake Bay Agreement does not include actions to address illegal dumping, abandoned housing, food deserts, or toxic pollution. The absence of such language is poised to inadvertently help sustain such issues.

Community Engagement Outcome: Expand the Chesapeake Bay Programs' message beyond the conservation and protection of the natural environment to include the funding of more diverse program areas. Work with EPA Region 3 to increase appropriations to agencies, or programs that deal with environmental justice, toxics, and urban blight. In FY 2013-2014 there was no funding for these issues, including toxics; even though, a significant amount of comments on toxic chemicals were received. Increase outreach and funding for existing urban environmental programs, or to establish new programs that address urban food deserts, abandoned housing, illegal dumping, and community engagement with civic and community leaders. Fund and support these programs through grants with special attention given to minority owned businesses, non-profits, local jurisdictions serving urban communities as well as non-minority groups working on the above issues.

Decision-making Body Outcome: Expand efforts to recruit qualified minority owned non-profits and businesses, and local civic leaders for decision making agencies and boards. These partners should have a stake in environmental justice, food access, and eliminating toxic pollution in urban communities. Have a minimum 10% representation for these communities in agency staff and 20% representation on related boards. To be completed by 2020.

Environmental Education

Environmental education has served as a fun filled, hands-on subject for grade school students around this region. In Maryland and other jurisdictions, this education is now, or will be mandated through environmental literacy requirements for high school graduation. This is a good thing. The focus to increase the number of students participating in meaningful outdoor watershed experiences is also a welcomed. However, the Chesapeake Bay Agreement must go further on this issue.

Goal: The Chesapeake Bay Agreement must go further to encourage environmental education that prepares students for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math careers. There should be policy and funding to bring together grade school and College and Universities with the intent to provide increased access to environmental programs and scholarships. This policy and funding behavior is especially prudent for communities where employment, career development, and job training is most elusive and where women and other minorities are in high demand for STEM careers.

Funding Outcome: By the year 2017, 50% of colleges and universities providing environmental programs within the Chesapeake Bay will have funding to engage high school students. Such programs should be designed to increase access to Science, Technology, Engineering, Math careers for all. However, they must also have specific and adequate funding to increase access for women and other minorities. Entrance and success in these programs will provide an additional metric for measuring the efficacy of environmental literacy in grade schools.

Sincerely,

Timothy Bodison
Prince George's County, Maryland resident