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Citizens Advisory Committee

TO THE CHESAPEAKE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

March 28, 2017

Chesapeake Executive Council:

As your appointed volunteers representing perspectives from citizens, we strongly urge you to advocate for full funding of \$73 million for the EPA Chesapeake Bay Program (Bay Program). A healthy Chesapeake Bay is an economic engine for our region. The seafood industry alone provides more than 41,000 jobs and \$2 billion in sales.¹ Oyster and clam aquaculture is now thriving in the Bay, netting Virginia alone approximately \$50 million in 2015.² Real estate, tourism, and many other commercial sectors also rely on the health of the Rivers of the Chesapeake Bay and the Chesapeake Bay Program is the foundation for clean waterways in our region.

The President's 2018 Budget Blueprint proposal to eliminate the funding for the Bay Program and other Bay-related federal programs would severely threaten the health of local rivers and the Chesapeake Bay, state and local water protection, and the scientific integrity of the restoration effort. Two-thirds of the Bay Program funding is passed down to the States and local governments, and for on-the-ground restoration programs that include the highly effective Small Watershed and Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Grants. While the combined contributions by the States and D.C. make up the majority of the investments toward watershed recovery, the Bay Program and other federal spending are crucial components to the success of the Chesapeake Bay Partnership. Simply put, the states already invest in the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort and cannot make up the difference if the federal responsibility is not met.

The Bay Program supports local restoration work by providing essential monitoring of progress, modeling for decision making, and collaboration among the six States, D.C., local governments and stakeholders. The Bay Program provides much-needed, and otherwise not available, technical support, expert panel guidance, and collaboration to all of the partners working for healthy and resilient local rivers systems. Elimination of the Bay Program and other Bay-related federal funding sends a strong signal that the federal government will not uphold its responsibility and contribution for clean water and human health as Congress intended by the Clean Water Act. Furthermore, Section 117 of the Clean Water Act calls for the EPA Administrator to maintain an office to support the Chesapeake Bay Program. Without the Bay Program the States' ability to adapt practices for performance and cost effectiveness and reduce pollution flowing into local rivers will be critically hindered.

The Bay Program has led a successful Federal-State partnership that is showing progress in improved water health and living resources. In 2009 a peer reviewed economic analysis concluded that the cost to implement the clean-up plan provides over four times the economic return.³ If the clean-up plan was fully implemented, the value of our region's land and water natural benefits would be \$129.7 billion per year.⁴ If the clean-up plan is not finished it would mean a loss of value of \$5.6 billion every year.⁵ The Bay Program and other federal agencies contribute to a healthy economy relied upon by the residents and businesses in the watershed.

Administrator Pruitt expressed his support for the Chesapeake Bay Program during his Congressional confirmation hearing in January 2017, indicating the EPA and States' approach to the Bay clean-up should be "commended and celebrated". As your appointed advisors, we agree and strongly encourage you to fight to ensure the federal government upholds its role in continuing the progress and economic value of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed for future generations.

Thank you for your urgent attention to this crucial federal 2018 Fiscal Year budgeting concern. It holds great influence over the 18 million residents that rely on a clean Chesapeake Bay Watershed for health, jobs, and tourism. The Bay Program is a national model because of its ability to establish effective collaboration among the six states and D.C, at least ten federal agencies, dozens of nonprofit organizations, several leading research institutions, and the public. As the Chesapeake Bay Program goes, so goes similarly complex watershed restoration efforts around our nation.

Please let us know if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,



Paula Jasinski
Chair, Citizens' Advisory Committee

¹ CBP Website 2011.

http://www.chesapeakebay.net/blog/post/ask_a_scientist_how_big_of_an_industry_is_the_chesapeake_bay

² VIMS 2015 Shellfish Aquaculture Situation and Outlook Report, Hudson and Murray

³ Spencer Phillips, Ph.D., 2009. *The Economic Benefits of Cleaning Up the Chesapeake: A Valuation of the Natural Benefits Gained by Implementing the Chesapeake Clean Water Blueprint*, report commissioned by Chesapeake Bay Foundation developed by with scientific assistance from Beth McGee, Ph.D., and peer reviewed by Dr. Gerald Kaufman of University of Delaware, Dr. Valerie Esposito of Champlain College, Dr. Tania Briceno of Earth Economics, and Mr. Dan Nees of the University of Maryland Center

⁴ Phillips, The Economic Benefits of Cleaning Up the Chesapeake

⁵ Phillips, The Economic Benefits of Cleaning Up the Chesapeake