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Ms. Julie Patton Lawson, Chair
Citizens Advisory Committee
24 Underwood Place, NW
Washington, DC 20012

Dear Chairperson Lawson:

On behalf of the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) partnership, I want to thank you and the Citizens Advisory Committee's (CAC) for the recommendations provided to the Chesapeake Executive Council in your December 1, 2021, letter. The CBP appreciates the time and effort CAC dedicated to articulating your recommendations. At their March 2, 2022, meeting, the Principals' Staff Committee directed the Management Board to respond to respond to CAC. We extend our sincere appreciation to the members of CAC for their ongoing contributions to the CBP. Please consider the following response to your letter's three recommendations.

- 1. We encourage the Executive Council to request that the EPA and other federal agencies make available the Bay-related funding as quickly as possible, especially given the looming 2025 TMDL deadline. In addition, we urge Bay jurisdictions to (a) expedite implementation of the prioritized practices that deliver co-benefits for water quality, healthy habitats, and living resources in a changing climate and (b) collaboratively develop a framework that outlines how jurisdictions anticipate their use of the remaining American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds and the new infrastructure funds to maximize these programs' impact.*

We recognize the urgency to make Chesapeake Bay-related funding provided through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) available as quickly as possible to support activities that advance the goals of the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement and the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). The CBP shares your desire to support both of these actions as we work to accelerate actions to meet the Partnership's goals and outcomes. The agenda for the March 10, 2022, Management Board meeting included what we expect will be the first of many discussions on federal funds available through the IIJA. We anticipate that these discussions will continue as federal agencies receive Congressionally appropriated funding. We commit to exploring strategies and tools, such as the Watershed Data Dashboard and the current Chesapeake Assessment Scenario Tool, that could be used to help expedite implementation of projects that generate multiple ecosystem and community resilience benefits.

- 2. To take advantage of the infrastructure funds that advance the commitments outlined in the*

Chesapeake Executive Directive 21-1 Collective Action for Climate Change, we encourage the Executive Council to direct their jurisdictions to ensure their policies are aligned with the Partnership's climate goals and to assess the capacity of their agencies to deliver climate resilient programs.

Following the Executive Council (EC) signing of the *Chesapeake Executive Directive 21-1 Collective Action for Climate Change* in October 2021, the Management Board, convened a planning group comprised of jurisdiction and federal agency representatives to develop a partnership-wide response and plan for implementing the Directive. This planning group is working together to understand where jurisdiction climate-related activities align with the commitments outlined in the Directive, identifying priority areas for collaborative action, and developing a workplan to guide partnership activities.

In addition, the CBP Federal Office Directors (FOD) will soon release a statement outlining specific climate commitments from their agencies and collective opportunities to carry out the four major goals of the Directive.

It is important to note that the CBP, with the coordinating efforts of the Climate Resiliency Workgroup, continues to pursue the priorities articulated in the EC's directive through various avenues and at all levels of the partnership. For example, each Goal Implementation Team has been asked to address climate resiliency concerns through their updated logic and action plans as part of the CBP's Strategy Review System.

3. *To begin addressing this equity and access concern, we strongly encourage the Executive Council members to ask federal agencies to review publicly funded Bay-related grant opportunities with stringent matching stipulations for modification to a more equitable process, thereby allowing more organizations to qualify for and have access to vital funding sources.*

We recognize the many barriers to participation in community-led restoration and the challenges under-resourced and underrepresented organizations face when accessing and applying for public funding. The CBP is taking steps to meet the Diversity Outcome of the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement and following the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ) Strategy and Implementation plan approved by the Principals' Staff Committee in November 2021 and the Executive Council in December 2021. The Diversity Outcomes and the DEIJ Strategy call for the CBP and its partners to create meaningful opportunities to engage underrepresented groups in the Bay Program's efforts and collectively take steps to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion through Bay-related grantmaking and contracting. The CBPO is working to identify a cross-partnership DEIJ coordinator to support these efforts.

The active GIT-funded project "Cultivating and Strengthening Partnerships with Underrepresented Stakeholders", promises to inform improvements for CBP communications and engagement efforts with underrepresented stakeholders. The upcoming GIT-funded project, "Equitable Grant Funding in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed", will strive to improve

equitable funding for activities related to conservation, restoration, and stewardship in the Chesapeake Bay watershed by facilitating learning and building connections between funders and under resourced organizations.

On behalf of the Management Board and the CBP, please extend my appreciation to the members of CAC for their time and effort in developing these recommendations. The CAC continues to be a vital link to Chesapeake Bay communities and for ensuring diverse perspectives are central to our decisions.

Sincerely,

Michelle Price-Fay, Acting Chair
Chesapeake Bay Program Management Board

cc: Chesapeake Bay Program Management Board