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**Local Government
Advisory Committee**

to the Chesapeake Executive Council

September 19, 2022

Michael Regan, Chair
Chesapeake Executive Council
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Mail Code: 1101A
Washington District of Columbia 20460

Re: LGAC 2022 Annual Recommendations

As Chair of the Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC), I represent the collective voice of local elected officials throughout the Chesapeake watershed. We support the vision of healthy local watersheds that has the added benefit of improving the health of the Chesapeake Bay.

LGAC hopes its priorities align with yours for the successful restoration of the Bay. All politics is local. Local leaders serve as a unique vessel that can not only reach out to other local/state/federal leadership, but, most importantly, to our residents, whose support is vital to our shared vision of creating healthy waterways and communities. The time is now for our communities to better know and understand why Bay restoration is vital to their quality of life and, in turn, to see the government investments made to address issues in their communities. If that is achieved, LGAC believes there will be buy-in unlike we have ever seen on the issues that everyone collectively is fighting for.

For several years LGAC has recommended that jurisdictions begin a more concerted focus on the increasingly significant impact caused by extreme localized flooding events. As leaders representing various types of communities, LGAC urge partners to recognize that flooding isn't isolated to coastal communities and isn't always the result of precipitation. As we work to obtain buy-in from our residents and state leaders to invest in flooding - we must also recognize that opportunities must exist to address neighborhood flooding that results from other environmental and man-made factors. In doing so, all levels of government will create sustainable communities while immediately improving citizens quality of life.

LGAC is here as your partner and I am pleased to present the attached 2022 Annual Recommendations to the Chesapeake Executive Council.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jasmine Gore".

Jasmine Gore, LGAC Chair

Cc: Chesapeake Executive Council
Kandis Boyd, Director, Chesapeake Bay Program
Enclosure

Jennifer Starr, Director of Local Government Programs/LGAC Coordinator
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2022 Annual Recommendations to the Chesapeake Executive Council



Each year, LGAC collectively invests a significant amount of time and problem-solving efforts to address the many issues affecting our local governments' ability to participate in and more fully benefit from the Vision contained in the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement. What we learned over the last year is that local governments are concerned about having the ability and capacity (both human and fiscal) to address these issues in a manner that provides a more equitable distribution of the benefits of our efforts. Additionally, we are concerned about the ever-increasing impacts of the severe flooding we are witnessing, especially as it impacts our infrastructure maintenance needs, and the negative impact it can have on our efforts to grow our local economies. We still need help addressing climate resiliency, workforce development and training, and a variety of other issues that affect the health, safety and welfare of our constituents, as well as the health of the Watershed.

This year (for the first time in many people's lifetime!) the federal government stepped up its efforts to share in our burden, including the federal American Rescue Plan Act, the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and the newly-signed Inflation Reduction Act. There is now and will be significant funding made available for the needed infrastructure construction and maintenance needs we face, as well as additional funds to help us deal with addressing our climate-related improvements.

Beneficial as these new opportunities are, they have unnecessarily created a uniquely new challenge for local governments as we are having to compete for limited expertise, manpower and resources to implement projects. These challenges include building the local capacity to research innovative solutions that support green efforts, in addition to applying for and accessing new funding. If a municipality has the staff and resources to overcome the hurdles noted above, they still face obstacles related to completing the project in the required timeframe, complying with all the grant reporting/project management requirements, and dedicating funding to future maintenance, which are all incredibly difficult to overcome.

As a result, communities are reverting to the "status-quo" and that which they know rather than taking this opportunity to support cutting-edge technology because it is new or requires in-depth research or required skilled labor to initiate and/or maintain that may not be locally available. New solutions are needed, as traditional pathways to training, credentialing and/or employment are strained due to a limited pool of resources available in relation to the many communities in need.

Developing and supporting workforce development efforts, especially in traditionally-underrepresented communities, and addressing flooding impacts and other climate resiliency initiatives are thus not supported to the extent that local leaders would like for a number of real reasons. It should also be noted that the current situation is a perfect storm resulting from years of advocacy for state and federal leadership to invest in local government, employment, and infrastructure.

Therefore, we recommend the Executive Council take the following actions to advance Chesapeake Bay watershed restoration and protection efforts at the local level.

Identify jurisdiction workforce development training programs to support blue/green jobs

Federal resources under the American Rescue Plan Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law have created unique opportunities for local governments to proactively and thoughtfully address community infrastructure needs. The challenge now is, due to concise timeframes for spending these funds, local governments are heavily competing with other communities for trained, certified, and qualified contractors to design and implement these infrastructure projects and frequently not being successful. Efforts to identify the needed skills, develop training and certification programs to address those needs, and reach a broadly represented and inclusive employable workforce are a challenge. Jurisdictions need to identify barriers to this challenge to improve community resilience and quality of life.

LGAC urges jurisdiction Governors and the District of Columbia Mayor to require their Cabinet leadership to:

- Collect a listing of all training opportunities, including categories for recruitment, development, retention, education related to green jobs at the local/state levels to support the planning, design and maintenance of watershed goals.
- List all jobs in high-demand or hard to fill within their state Environmental Offices

These lists will provide results that will determine where there is need and where to focus future efforts. Results and efforts should be publicly available on all relevant web pages and dispersed widely. LGAC also suggests that a more concentrated focus on making this training available for underrepresented communities occur, and developing blue/green job programs, promoting them widely and through multiple channels, and supporting opportunities for growth within the programs to ensure a livable wage will support jurisdiction efforts to revitalize communities and residents.

LGAC calls on the Chesapeake Executive Council to take the leadership role in promoting the requisite green infrastructure workforce development, training and certification programs as a means to support local economies and continue watershed restoration efforts.

Develop jurisdiction-specific consolidated funding application portals

Given this once-in-a-lifetime outpouring of federal funding opportunities that are being funneled directly to local governments and through jurisdictions, LGAC encourages the development of a one-stop-shop application portal for project proposal submission. This priority is critical and timely.

Currently federal funds are directed to numerous federal agencies who are or have, in turn, established guidelines and procedures for applying for and dispersing such funds. All have separate deadlines and unique requirements. LGAC recognizes that this process is competitive and each agency has unique goals to achieve success. The immediate challenge for applicants is understanding the processes, requirements, deadlines, and, for a number of funding mechanisms, meeting match requirements. Given the human and fiscal capacity challenge many municipalities face on an on-going basis, keeping track of all of the varying funding opportunities is daunting. In addition, currently deadlines are tight and do not factor in the statutorily required time frames which municipal applicants face as they issue bids and procure

qualified and experienced contractors.

Therefore, and recognizing that LGAC's ask is not an easy one, we nonetheless request some out-of-the-box thinking to re-assess how funding is made available, what the requirements are, how proposals are submitted and how selection is determined. LGAC recognizes this is an overly-simplistic example but the EC should consider using the Common Application process colleges and universities have developed for undergraduate applicants as a model. LGAC acknowledges that some jurisdictions have developed and/or are in the process of developing examples of these portals (i.e., Maryland's new Resilience and Restoration Grants Gateway and Delaware Database for Funding Resilient Communities).

LGAC urges jurisdiction Governors and the District of Columbia Mayor to require their Cabinet leadership to:

- Collect all funding sources available from Chesapeake Bay Program federal and jurisdiction partners and simplify the application process.

LGAC calls on jurisdiction members of the Chesapeake Executive Council to develop consolidated and easy-to-use grant portal to include all federal funding opportunities, and calls on EPA and its federal partners to simplify and streamline grant application processes relating to Chesapeake Bay priorities for the purpose of inclusion and full representation of the watershed communities.

LGAC hopes its priorities align with yours for the successful restoration of the Bay. As your advisors on issues related to local government engagement, we stand ready to assist in achieving our collective vision for a clean and healthy Chesapeake Bay watershed through the implementation of these recommendations.