

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 11, 2025

Chesapeake Executive Council  
Chesapeake Bay Program  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1750 Forest Drive, Suite 130  
Annapolis, MD 21401

CC: Principals' Staff Committee

Members of the Chesapeake Executive Council:

We write as Members of Congress representing the Chesapeake Bay watershed to provide feedback on the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement Beyond 2025 Revision Draft*. We appreciate this opportunity to provide input as the Principals' Staff Committee (PSC) continues its important work to propose updates to the *2014 Watershed Agreement* at this crucial moment in our collective efforts to restore the health of the Bay and the rivers and streams throughout its watershed.

As federal representatives for the Bay region, we are working hard to ensure that we maintain strong funding for the Environmental Protection Agency Chesapeake Bay Program as well as the other critical federal programs that support ecosystem restoration in the Bay watershed. While federal resources will continue to play an essential role in achieving our vision of a healthy Bay, we know that we cannot arrive at our many goals through such funding alone. A robust *Watershed Agreement* that sets measurable targets that are both ambitious and achievable is key to unlocking the full potential of federal support for the Bay and its watershed. Therefore, we are closely monitoring the PSC's work to update the agreement to meet current and future challenges.

Today, the Bay and its watershed face numerous interrelated and pressing challenges, including falling populations of key fish and wildlife species, emerging pollutants of concern, agricultural land and forest depletion, shifting environmental dynamics, and the prevalence of invasive species. We appreciate that the draft revised *Watershed Agreement* addresses these issues in a holistic manner, maintaining strong water quality and habitat restoration goals at its core, while also pursuing outcomes to deliver healthy landscapes, vibrant living resources, and engaged communities throughout the Bay.

In the final updated *Watershed Agreement*, the PSC should strive to put forward clearly defined targets that emphasize local ecosystem and quality of life benefits where they will be felt most by our constituents in the watershed. Stating the goals of the revised agreement without ambiguity will inspire accountability among stakeholders and promote transparency in efforts to monitor and communicate progress toward these targets.

To that end, the PSC should also seek to ensure that the final *Watershed Agreement* lays out clear timelines for meeting its recommended targets, particularly in relation to its water quality and pollution reduction goals. Improving water quality by reducing excess nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment, as well as other emerging contaminants, is essential to revitalizing the Bay's living resources and supporting local economies and recreation opportunities.

We recognize that the updated Bay water pollution model is forthcoming and will inform the long-term targets that are set, and we appreciate that the draft revised *Watershed Agreement* sets a December 2030 deadline for revising pollution reduction targets and implementation plans based on the updated model. Additionally, we urge the PSC to clearly express the relationship between these deadlines, implementation plans, and the legally mandated Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) requirements in the finalized agreement to maintain public confidence in our shared commitments to meet our water quality goals.

Furthermore, public understanding of the goals and mechanisms of the updated *Watershed Agreement* will be crucial to its successful implementation. Therefore, in the final agreement, the PSC should strive to use specific but accessible language so that the public can hold the signatories accountable for making progress toward stated targets. We also encourage the agreement's signatories and implementing partners to continue active public engagement after the updated agreement is finalized to ensure that our constituents can monitor its progress and have additional opportunities to provide feedback.

Finally, we applaud the PSC for including mechanisms for adaptive management in the draft agreement, which are crucial to ensuring that the finalized *Watershed Agreement* is informed by the most up-to-date science and capable of responding to changing environmental conditions. Uncertainty caused by shifting ecological dynamics has complicated the task of restoring the Bay and exacerbated many of the fundamental challenges to our efforts. Ensuring flexibility to respond to new obstacles as they arise will be necessary to support the updated agreement's continued success.

Improving the health of the Bay will require continued cooperation from all of us at the federal, state, and local levels of government, in partnership with tribal communities, non-governmental organizations, private businesses, landowners, academic experts, and the public. As we continue our work to deliver the federal resources for the Bay necessary to achieve our goals, we encourage the PSC to put forward a bold updated *Watershed Agreement* that will maximize the impact of these funds and demonstrate to our constituents the importance of our collective efforts.

We appreciate this opportunity to provide feedback on the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement Beyond 2025 Revision Draft* and look forward to reviewing the finalized document. Thank you for your consideration and ongoing partnership as we work toward a healthy Bay and watershed for all.

Sincerely,



Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



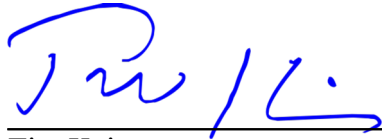
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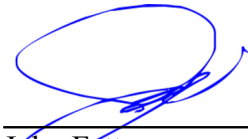
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Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



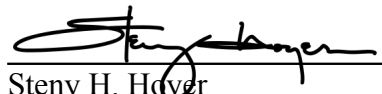
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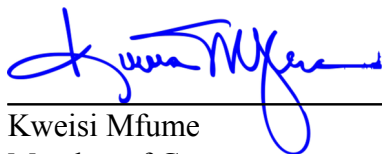
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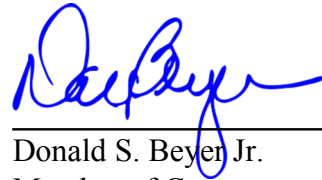
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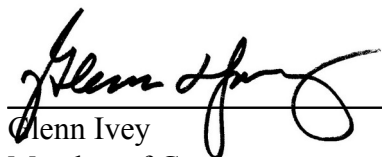
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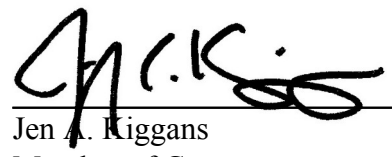
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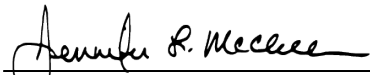
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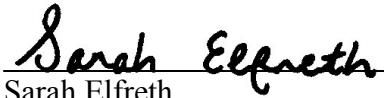
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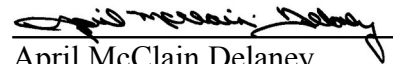
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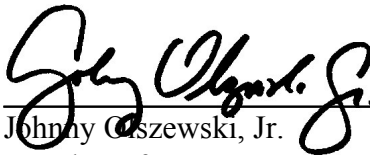
Sarah Elfreth  
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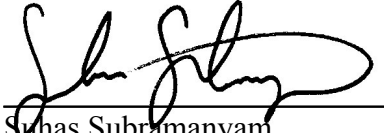
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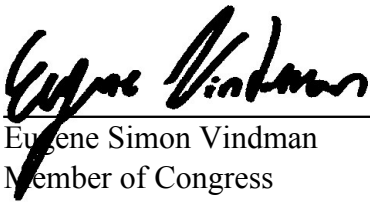
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