

DATE:

The Honorable **Daniel Chao**, Chair
CBP Local Government Advisory Committee
c/o Jennifer Starr, Coordinator
Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
151 West Street, Suite 101
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Gore:

On behalf of the Chesapeake Executive Council (EC), I would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to you and the Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC) members for the time and resources you put into problem-solving issues to address local governments' **and residents'** contributions to the protection and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay **and to healthy local watersheds that contribute to the Bay's overall health**. Thank you especially for your thoughtful recommendations to the EC (dated September 19, 2022). We greatly appreciate the opportunity to respond to your recommendations.

Overall, we agree with many of the key recommendations highlighted in your letter. The partnership is certainly concerned about the ever-increasing impacts of **extreme localized flooding events due in part to** climate change and the adverse impacts it can have on our efforts throughout the watershed. The partnership is taking **both land use changes to the natural and built environment and** climate change into consideration as we work towards attaining the broad spectrum of our outcomes. Like LGAC, many Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) jurisdiction partners have long recognized that the detrimental impacts caused by flooding events can undermine efforts to improve water quality, habitat, fisheries and other CBP outcomes. The CBP Management Board (MB) agrees that a more concerted focus on flood mitigation and adaptation is needed and we look forward to raising this issue for discussion at a future MB meeting and also for consideration for a Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) workshop.

While we are optimistic that the new funding provided by Congress through the Federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) will have far reaching impacts on our collective work, we recognize the added challenges those funds are creating in relation to administrative burden and staffing issues. We look forward to engaging with you at the MB and Principals' Staff Committee (PSC) to brainstorm solutions to those problems.

The following are additional responses to the LGAC's highlighted recommendations:

- *"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." ...LGAC urges jurisdiction Governors and the District of Columbia Mayor to require their Cabinet leadership to: a) 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; and b) List all jobs in high-demand or hard to fill within their state Environmental Offices.

- Partnership response: The MB is committed to working across the partnership to help better understand and promote workforce development related to the Watershed Agreement outcomes, including green infrastructure jobs. To this end, the MB during its May 2022 meeting established a Workforce Action Team and is hiring a contractor through the GIT-funding process to conduct a Landscape Assessment that will begin in Summer 2023. The MB will request that the jurisdictions report the information requested by LGAC to the MB to inform the Landscape Assessment, and report findings back to the MB at regular intervals. The MB will also provide reminders to the partners to regularly post job openings on the partnership's watershed-wide resources website (<http://chesapeakenetwork.org/>, hosted by the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay) and other list serves and websites as appropriate.
- *“Develop jurisdiction-specific consolidated funding application portals. 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.”*
 - Partnership response:

The partnership appreciates the thinking around how grant proposals are submitted and how selections are determined and agrees that streamlined funding delivery systems are necessary to efficiently and effectively accomplish our goals. However, each granting body has unique federal and state requirements (under separate statutes), which significantly complicates the ability to create a single grant application process. Nevertheless, a discussion about the feasibility of streamlining application processes is worth exploring and will be discussed at a future MB meeting. **In the meantime, the partnership can work with jurisdictions and other federal partners to identify streamlined processes that they have created to make the grant application process easier. Technical Assistance Centers supported by EPA are new additional resources that can help applicants navigate grant opportunities. The Bay program is also working to remove federal match requirements on some of its Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds to make it easier to access this new important source of funding for at-risk communities, living resources and to address green infrastructure needs.**

Thank you again for your ongoing commitment to helping the partnership. We look forward to working with you on these issues in the coming months. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any suggestions that might help address these challenging issues.

Sincerely,

Dave Campbell
Management Board Chair **and Acting Director**,
Chesapeake Bay Program **Office**

Cc: Chesapeake Executive Council Members
Principals' Staff Committee Members
Management Board Members