

February 22, 2018

Betsy DeVos
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education

Dear Secretary DeVos,

The Chesapeake Bay Program commends the U.S. Department of Education for its continued support and administration of the Green Ribbon School Program. The benefits of sustainable and healthy schools to local communities are numerous, and your agency's forward-thinking effort to recognize school's green performance has been critical to raising awareness and promoting positive change in our region's public, charter, and private schools.

The Bay Program is a regional partnership that leads the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay. It is headed by the Chesapeake Executive Council, which consists of the Governors of the six watershed states, the Mayor of the District of Columbia, the Chair of the Chesapeake Bay Commission and the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

In June 2014, the Council signed the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, a collaborative plan that guides the restoration and stewardship of the Bay, its tributaries and the lands that surround them. This Agreement includes a Sustainable Schools Outcome that commits our partnership to the following:

"Continually increase the number of schools in the region that reduce the impact of their buildings and grounds on their local watershed, environment and human health through best practices, including student-led protection and restoration projects."

This Outcome is rooted in the three "Pillars" of the Education Department's Green Ribbon Schools Program which recognize schools that:

1. Reduce environmental impact and costs;
2. Improve the health and wellness of schools, students, and staff; and
3. Provide effective environmental and sustainability education.

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We believe that increasing school performance in these three pillars will have positive impacts to the Chesapeake and our many rivers and streams by reducing runoff pollution and energy use, among other positive environmental impacts. Just as important, progress in these pillars can save schools precious fiscal resources by reducing costs of utilities and waste management.

To this end, we are committed to bolstering participation in the Green Ribbon School program and highlighting schools in our region that achieve this prestigious status. We support efforts to break down barriers to school sustainability and provide technical assistance to schools conducting and developing sustainability initiatives. We are grateful for the Education Department's leadership in school sustainability, and look forward to the announcement of the 2018 Green Ribbon School award winners.

Respectfully,

Benjamin H. Grumbles
Chair, Chesapeake Bay Program Principals' Staff Committee
Secretary, Maryland Department of the Environment

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Nathan Bailey, Assistant Secretary, Office of Communications and Outreach

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