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## Citizens Advisory Committee

TO THE CHESAPEAKE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

June 21, 2013

Honorable Vincent C. Gray, Mayor of the District of Columbia and Chair of the CEC  
Honorable Martin O'Malley, Governor of Maryland  
Honorable Tom Corbett, Governor of Pennsylvania  
Honorable Bob McDonnell, Governor of Virginia  
Honorable Bob Perciasepe, Acting Administrator, EPA,  
Honorable Maggie McIntosh, Chair, Chesapeake Bay Commission

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Chesapeake Executive Council:

We are writing to express our deep concerns about the Obama Administration's Fiscal 2014 budget which proposes to terminate funding for NOAA's Chesapeake Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Program as part of a Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education restructuring plan. This proposal, as currently conceived, makes no sense from an education, efficiency or fiscal policy perspective and would undermine important progress that State and local education agencies and their non-profit partners are making in achieving Chesapeake environmental education goals and commitments. We urge you to voice your own concerns in this matter and request that the President and the Congress reconsider this plan and the important role of education in the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort.

The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) has long believed that an educated and environmentally literate citizenry is the key to ensuring a healthy and enduring Chesapeake Bay watershed. In our 2012 Report, we called upon the Executive Council to strengthen environmental education by:

- approving the *Mid-Atlantic Elementary and Secondary Environmental Literacy Strategy*, developed by NOAA in partnership with the States.
- establishing two year milestones for achieving the environmental literacy for all students in the watershed.
- encouraging the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education to become formally engaged in education aspects of Chesapeake restoration and actively support the environmental education efforts of the State and local education agencies in the watershed.

Jessica M. Blackburn, CAC Coordinator

P.O. Box 1981 | Richmond, VA 232178 | 804/775-0951 | 804/775-0954 (fax) | [jblackburn@allianceforthebay.org](mailto:jblackburn@allianceforthebay.org)

NOAA's Chesapeake B-WET Program plays a vital role in advancing the environmental education goals and commitments established by the CEC in four Bay Agreements or directives. Since its inception more than a decade ago, Chesapeake B-WET has provided grants that served as the catalyst for enabling meaningful watershed educational experiences for 425,000 K-12 students and more than 16,000 teachers throughout the watershed. It is the *only* Federal program specifically dedicated to environmental and outdoor education in the Chesapeake watershed and was cited by the National Research Council of the National Academies of Science as a "model" program, noted for its rigorous program-wide assessment of performance and impact among students and teachers. The program not only advances STEM education by engaging and training students in real-world, hands-on, experiences in the environment – often the pathway to future careers in the sciences -- but serves a critical stewardship purpose as well. In short, a small federal investment in Chesapeake BWET produces substantial benefits and returns – for the Chesapeake and for the academic performance of our youth.

Rather than "reinvent the wheel" and terminate a successful and effective program, we believe that BWET should be a foundation upon which the Obama Administration and the U.S. Department of Education builds its STEM education strategy, by leveraging, partnering with and strengthening it. No one disagrees that improving STEM is a worthy goal, but so is restoring the Chesapeake Bay watershed. With vision, careful planning and cooperation both can be done even at a time of constrained resources.

We urge you to express your own concerns to President Obama, Education Secretary Arne Duncan and the members of the Chesapeake Bay region Congressional Delegation about this proposal and its impact on your state's environmental education and restoration goals. As currently conceived, this proposal not only puts an important component of our Bay restoration effort at risk, but undercuts the very goal – a key pathway to future careers in STEM-related fields -- that the Obama Administration seeks to achieve with its STEM restructuring.

Your attention to this matter is appreciated and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



R. John Dawes  
Chair, Citizens Advisory Committee

CC: President Barack Obama  
Arne Duncan, U.S. Education Secretary  
Jeff Corbin, Senior Advisor on the Chesapeake Bay, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Nick DiPasquale, Director, EPA Chesapeake Bay Program  
Ann Swanson, Executive Director, Chesapeake Bay Commission