



Citizens Advisory Committee

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October 20, 2016

Honorable Terence R. McAuliffe
Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of the Governor
Chair, Chesapeake Executive Council
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor McAuliffe,

As your citizen advisors to the Chesapeake Bay partnership, the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) is writing to urge you to reconsider the decision to close the Office of Environmental Education (OEE) in the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR).

We were dismayed and deeply concerned to learn that this office and its staff would be terminated for budgetary reasons on December 1, 2016. For nearly twenty years, the OEE has played a vital role in advancing environmental literacy in Virginia and preparing the next generation to be good stewards of the Chesapeake Bay and Virginia's environment and natural resources.

While we acknowledge the key role that the staff of the Virginia Department of Education has in advancing environmental literacy among students, we also see the larger role that the Office of Environmental Education has played in professional development and training programs, and initiatives such as Virginia Naturally and Adopt-a-Stream, to name only a few, that promote not only student education, but citizen engagement, and partnership and community capacity-building which are critical to the long term sustainability of efforts to restore and protect the Chesapeake and Virginia's economy, environment and quality of life.

As the CAC pointed out at this year's Executive Council meeting, Bay leaders including yourself have repeatedly identified environmental and outdoor education as a priority in four Bay Agreements or directives and an issue that is key to the future and sustained well-being of the Chesapeake watershed. Terminating this office would be a significant blow to the progress that has been made to date in advancing environmental literacy in Virginia, and would be a set-back to achieving the environmental literacy goals of the 2014 Chesapeake Watershed Agreement.



Chesapeake Bay Program
A Watershed Partnership

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We respectfully request that you reexamine this decision and explore all options for retaining this desperately needed function, including relocating the office, its staff and its responsibilities to another Department, if necessary. We look forward to working with you and your Administration to ensure that this important function is continued.

Sincerely,



Charles A. Stek
Chair, Citizens Advisory Committee



Paula Jasinski
Vice-Chair, Citizens Advisory Committee

cc: Secretary of Natural Resources Molly Ward
Deputy Secretary Russ Baxter