

Senate Bill 73 - Renaming the Chesapeake Conservation Corps Program to be the Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr. Chesapeake Conservation and Climate Corps Program

In Favor: Written Testimony

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My name is Suzanne Sullivan, Director of Education at the environmental nonprofit ShoreRivers, and I am a proud member of the 2013-2014 Chesapeake Conservation Corps class. I enthusiastically express my support for renaming this program to reflect Senate President Miller's legacy in establishing a program that has been so instrumental in my life. A decade later, I am still employed, now in a leadership position, at my original Corps host site and I have experienced the long-term impacts of this program on both individuals, organizations, and agencies in Maryland.

A year as a Corps Member is filled with professional and personal learning and growth, and the professional network this program creates each graduation year is truly impressive. As a result, I now have colleagues across the state and throughout the Chesapeake watershed, who were once Corps Members and are now united collaborators working with the common goal of a healthier Chesapeake Bay and communities.

I continue to see the positive impact of this program as my role as a mentor at a host site. ShoreRivers has hosted over ten Corps Members, and every year they expand our organization's capacity to deliver programs. Over the years, they have also certainly contributed to our growth as an organization of 8 employees to 33 as we've been able to hire on many of our Members for full-time, permanent positions following their Corps service. These young people infuse our work with energy and new ideas, many of which have become established programs at our organization.

Lastly and of equal importance, I support the intentional addition of "Climate" to the Corps name. In our profession, and in our lifetime, it's vital to call out and name one of humankind's greatest challenges, so that we can be even more purposeful in our work to combat and mitigate the impacts of climate change and restore our environment.

Just as the Lorax spoke for the trees, let me speak for the Chesapeake Bay and my fellow Corps classes as I express gratitude for the enduring impact of this program.