

2025 SB0073 Testimony For 2025-02-04.pdf

Uploaded by: Alan Lang

Position: FAV

Testimony For SB0073

Honorable Senators

Please enter a favorable decision for SB0073.

I support renaming the Chesapeake Conservation Corps Program, to honor its founder, Senator Miller.

Please enter a favorable decision for SB0073.

Alan Lang
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Legislative District 30B
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February 4, 2025

SB 73 - CBF - FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Allison Colden

Position: FAV



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education

Senate Bill 73

Chesapeake Conservation Corps - Renaming

Date: February 4, 2025

To: Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

Position: **Favorable**

From: Allison Colden,
Executive Director

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 73 which would rename the Chesapeake Conservation Corps program to the Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr. Chesapeake Conservation and Climate Corps Program. The Chesapeake Conservation and Climate Corps (CCCC) hires from among the brightest new graduates in the environmental sciences to complete their skills training and engage in meaningful experiences to round out their academic education. Chesapeake Bay Foundation has been a host organization for numerous CCCC members, many of whom have been offered permanent positions within the organization. On the impact of the program on their personal growth and careers, former CCCC members, now CBF staff share:

“I was in the inaugural class of the Chesapeake Conservation Corps in 2010. CCC kick started my career in the environmental field, allowing me opportunities to explore and restore habitat across the Chesapeake region, work with wonderful people, grow in my career and engage with diverse communities across the watershed, and so much more.”

- Carmera Thomas-Wilhite, CBF Vice President for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice

“The CCCC helped me lay the groundwork for making the next steps in my career in coastal restoration in the Chesapeake Bay. Through the program, I was able to build relationships with so many influential people who mentored me and pushed me to achieve my professional goals, as well as with peers, many of whom I continue to work with in some capacity.”

- Julie Luecke, CBF Maryland Coastal Resource Scientist

“The CCCC program has provided me with hands-on experience in the environmental field and instilled confidence within myself as a young professional through invaluable personal and professional mentorship as well as comradery with my fellow corps members.”

- Adelle Thrush, 2025 CBF Chesapeake Conservation and Climate Corps Member

The impact of this program would not be possible without the leadership of Sen. Mike Miller who carried the legislation that led to its establishment. It is only appropriate that the program he supported and his legacy in support of Chesapeake Bay restoration is honored through this renaming.

CBF urges the Committee’s FAVORABLE report on SB 73.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

Maryland Office • Philip Merrill Environmental Center • 6 Herndon Avenue • Annapolis • Maryland • 21403

Senate Bill 73_Jeff Popp_Written Testimony.pdf

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Position: FAV

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

Jeffrey Popp
1610 Cananaro Ct
Annapolis, MD 21409

My name is Jeffrey Popp, and I currently serve as Director of Restoration at the environmental nonprofit Anne Arundel Watershed Stewards Academy (WSA). I am writing to express my support for Senate Bill 73 to rename the Chesapeake Conservation Corps Program to the Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr. Chesapeake Conservation and Climate Corps Program. This change reflects Senate President Miller's legacy and the impactful climate-related work that Corps Members have been carrying out throughout the program's 15 years.

As a two-time mentor to current and past Corps Members, I have seen firsthand how beneficial the program is to the Maryland and Chesapeake communities, both for the young adults who join the program as a first step in their green career journey and for our local natural resources. The program provides the opportunity for Corps Members to gain experience serving with a non-profit or government agency, confidence in their leadership skills, and the knowledge to help tackle the environmental challenges of today and tomorrow. Not only do Corps Members gain these valuable skills and knowledge, but they also gain a network of fellow young adults and establish lifelong personal and professional relationships.

The Corps program provides professional development and many other training opportunities that young adults may otherwise not be able to pursue, setting them up to successfully launch their careers and giving organizations the confidence that they are bringing on experienced team members. WSA has hosted several Corps Members, including a current Corps Member. I am happy to report that we actually hired our 2023-2024 Corps Member from last year to join the team as a full-time Restoration Coordinator. She is one of many Corps alumni who have been hired by their host site through the program. The Corps program creates a pathway to potential full-time employment for Corps Members and is such a benefit for the Members themselves and the organizations in our community that are looking for up and coming leaders in our field.

WSA is a non-profit that was created to build capacity of Anne Arundel County communities to reduce pollutants entering local waterways via stormwater. During the Corps year, WSA's current and former Corps Members have assisted in the management and development of stormwater restoration projects, distribution and installation of thousands of native trees, educating and training Master Watershed Stewards, conducting community outreach and education, as well as developing and led their own capstone projects. This year, our Corps Member is focusing on a behavior change project looking at the "why" that people participate in environmental stewardship. The hope is that once we know more about the "why", we can figure out the missing parts to help remove the barriers to engaging everyone in being involved in environmental initiatives.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my support for this name change and the Corps program.

Arundel Rivers FAV SB73.pdf

Uploaded by: Jennifer Carr Pilholski

Position: FAV



Testimony encouraging a FAVORABLE report on Senate Bill 73 – Chesapeake Conservation Corps Program – Renaming
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT OF SB73**.

In 2010, I had the privilege of joining the very first cohort of the Chesapeake Conservation Corps. I graduated in December 2007, the same month that the Great Recession began. Between the very limited job market and conservation positions all seeming to want relevant work experience, the idea of finding work in the conservation field seemed near impossible. Then one day in 2010, I came across a posting for this new program called the Chesapeake Conservation Corps that was willing to give recent graduates real world job experience. I quickly applied and was of course thrilled when I got a call offering me a position with a small watershed organization called the South River Federation, now the Arundel Rivers Federation. Of course I said yes!

Through this program, I had the opportunity to learn about Chesapeake Bay conservation and restoration through hands on work. Over the past 15 years, I've gone from an intern to serving as the Director of Restoration where I am able to continue working with the Chesapeake Bay Trust to implement millions of dollars of restoration serving communities throughout our watersheds. During this time, I've been able to see other year-one members go on to become project implementation officers with DNR and even the Vice President for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

Over the past 15 years, I have seen what an incredible impact this program can have on expanding the capacity of a small watershed organization. Our Corps members have led unique research projects helping us better understand our waterways, lead scuba diving surveys of oyster reefs, and worked with local partners to implement small-scale restoration projects. Once completing the program, our Corps members have gone on to serve through the Peace Corps, obtain masters degrees in the field of conservation, and become water resource engineers. We haven't just benefited from hosting. Our current Riverkeeper who recently brought SAV restoration to the Western Shore and our Outreach Coordinator who led summer camps this past year reaching well over 1,000 youth both started their careers as Corps members with one of our partners, Shore Rivers.

Arundel Rivers Federation applauds the Department for bringing forward this bill and we enthusiastically encourage and support the renaming of this program. As such, we respectfully request a **FAVORABLE REPORT on SB73**.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Carr
Director of Restoration
Arundel Rivers Federation

Ches Bay Trust Testimony - SB073.pdf

Uploaded by: Kacey Wetzel

Position: FAV



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

Date: February 4th, 2025

Submitted to: Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

Submitted by: Kacey Wetzel, Vice President of Outreach and Education

The Chesapeake Bay Trust supports Senate Bill 73 to rename the Chesapeake Conservation Corps Program to the Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr. Chesapeake Conservation and Climate Corps Program. This important piece of legislation will honor the legacy of State Senate President Mike Miller, who dedicated much of his life to the preservation of the Chesapeake Bay and the advancement of education and environmental stewardship in Maryland.

Senator Miller’s deep commitment to the Chesapeake Bay and his leadership in the Maryland General Assembly were critical in the establishment of the Chesapeake Conservation Corps Program. Chapters 257 and 276 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2010, which were sponsored by Senator Mike Miller, created the program and directed the Chesapeake Bay Trust to administer it. By renaming the program in his honor, we continue to recognize his positive influence on Maryland’s environmental efforts, as well as his passion for nurturing the next generation of environmental leaders.

For the past 15 years, the Chesapeake Conservation Corps has played a critical role in increasing access to green careers across the Chesapeake Bay watershed, providing young adults with hands-on experience in the restoration and protection of our environment. The program has been pivotal in developing the next generation of environmental stewards, ensuring that they are equipped with the skills and leadership necessary to address the challenges facing our natural resources.

Since its inception, the program has received nearly 1,600 applications from young adults eager to make a difference. It has successfully placed more than 500 individuals with nonprofit and government agencies across Maryland, where they gain valuable experience in fields such as environmental restoration, climate change mitigation, sustainable agriculture, energy conservation, forestry, community engagement, and more. Currently, the 15th class of the Corps includes over 50 members, underscoring the continued demand for this program.

Additionally, the Chesapeake Conservation Corps has an engaged and successful alumni network of over 400 individuals. Nearly 70% of these alumni have secured full-time “green” jobs immediately following their service year, with 29% continuing with their Host Organizations. These statistics demonstrate the program’s effectiveness in providing young people with the professional experience necessary to launch successful careers in environmental fields, supporting Maryland’s ongoing environmental goals.

Senate Bill 528, the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022, further expanded the Chesapeake Conservation Corps Program by increasing the focus on climate change-related projects. This critical legislation not only requires Corps projects to result in long-term preservation, protection, and conservation of the environment—including in areas such as environmental restoration, agriculture and forestry, infrastructure, and education—but also directs these projects to take place within communities disproportionately affected by climate impacts. The law places specific emphasis on climate mitigation and clean energy projects, prioritizing initiatives that lead to long-term reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and improvements to public health and the environment.

The proposed renaming of the Corps to the Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr. Chesapeake Conservation and Climate Corps Program will further cement the importance of this program and its alignment with Senator Miller’s legacy of environmental leadership. It will also bring greater visibility to the program’s work, helping to inspire future generations of young people to pursue careers in conservation, climate change action, and sustainability.

Favorable support by the committee to pass Senate Bill 0073 will ensure that we continue to honor Senator Mike Miller’s contributions to Maryland’s environmental and educational efforts while ensuring the continued success of the Corps for years to come.

Background on the Chesapeake Conservation and Climate Corps

The Chesapeake Conservation and Climate Corps places young people ages 18-25 in year-long, stipend-supported terms of service at host not-for-profit entities across the region. Corps members:

- 1) work on a project to advance their Host Organizations’ missions in the realms of watershed restoration, energy conservation, climate, climate justice, agriculture, and K-12 environmental education (expanding their Host Organizations’ capacity),
- 2) receive life and career skills training, and
- 3) learn to lead their own independent projects (including developing budgets and managing grants).

Host Organizations include environmental and non-environmental entities (e.g., faith institutions, local governments, school systems, civic associations with social missions, etc.) alike.

In its first 15 years, 428 alums have completed the Conservation Corps program. Thirty percent of Corps members are generally immediately hired by their Host Organizations or another host in the program, many into new jobs that were made possible by the expanded capacity at the Host Organization driven by the Corps member’s service. Hundreds of organizations have served as Host Organizations, many of which expanded in size during this period and have filled their staffs with Corps alums.

Over the 15 years of the Corps, members have planted 10,000 trees and 30,000 native plants and engaged 40,000 students and volunteers as part of their 400+ individual capstone projects.



From 2010 to 2023, the Corps was supported only by the Chesapeake Bay Trust’s unrestricted revenue (mostly Chesapeake vehicle license plate and tax checkoff funds), a mandated contribution from Maryland DNR, and voluntary contributions from the National Park Service, BGE, and others. For FY24, your committee approved an additional \$1.5 million mandated in the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022, which also required an increase in the members’ stipends, allowing an expansion of the Corps from 33 members to 50+ members.

Demand for the Chesapeake Conservation Corps has to date exceeded available resources by about double. Last year (2024-2025 Corps year), 145 prospective Corps members applied to serve, and 112 not-for-profit entities applied as hosts. For the 2025-2026 Corps class supported by this appropriation, 124 entities applied to serve as hosts with the member deadline in March.

More recently, the Trust has been working with the Governor’s new Department of Service and Civic Innovation, which is managing the new Service Year and Maryland Corps programs. As noted above, the Trust has been supporting the administration of the climate placements for the Service Year option. Our goal is to continue to coordinate to offer young people seamless Climate Corps opportunities.



More information about the Corps can be found at www.cbtrust.org/corps.

About the Chesapeake Bay Trust

The Trust was created by the Maryland General Assembly in 1985 as a nonprofit grant-making organization with a goal to increase stewardship and engagement in the restoration of the state’s local rivers, streams, parks, and other natural resources in diverse communities across the state, from the mountains of Western Maryland and the Youghiogheny watershed to the marshes of the Coastal Bays. The goal was to create an entity that could complement state agency work with groups on the ground: schools, nonprofit organizations, faith-based and reach large institutions, homeowners associations, community and civic associations, and other types of groups.

The Trust invests in local communities and watersheds through grant programs and special initiatives and is known for its efficiency, putting on average 90 cents of every dollar into programs. The Trust has awarded over \$200 million through more than 12,500 grants and projects in every county in Maryland since 1985 (www.cbtrust.org/impact). We make about 450 grants and other awards a year and have about 1,000 active grantees at any one time.

The Trust does not receive a direct state appropriation to support its operations, instead supported through revenue from the Chesapeake Bay vehicle license plate; half of the Chesapeake and Endangered Species Fund checkoff on the state income tax form; two new donation options through Maryland’s online boating, fishing, hunting license system, one that focuses on veterans’ rehabilitation; partnerships with federal, state, local agencies, family foundations, and corporate foundations; and individual donors.

Due to its efficiency, the Trust has been rated with the maximum four-star rating by the nation’s leading charity evaluator, Charity Navigator, for more than two decades, putting it in the top 1% of non-profits in the nation.

One of the Trust’s basic tenets in its strategic plan is to engage under-engaged audiences in natural resources issues, and that theme characterizes all the Trust’s programs, including the Chesapeake Conservation and Climate Corps. Every individual in our area benefits from healthy natural resources, and in turn, every individual can help natural resources.

SB 73 Senator Simonaire_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Kara Contino

Position: FAV

BRYAN W. SIMONAIRE
Legislative District 31
Anne Arundel County

Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



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The Senate of Maryland

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Senate Bill 73 - Chesapeake Conservation Corps Program - Renaming

I am Senator Bryan Simonaire presenting a very Bi-partisan bill: SB 73.

It is a **true testament to Mike Miller** that you see both Democrats and Republicans supporting this bill.

This is **consensus legislation** we have worked on for months with the **Chesapeake Bay Trust**, the **Department of Natural Resources**, **legislators** and of course, we shared with the **Mike Miller family**.

This bill does two things:

1. **Names the 'Chesapeake Conservation Corps Program'** after **Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr.**
2. Adds '**Climate**' to the Program's title.

When discussing the new title, we **considered its length**. We agreed this is appropriate for the formal title, but when necessary for space consideration, operationally we also allow for a shortened title.

This is a **common practice** in existing law as we see longer titles being referenced by shorter titles.

Additionally, when I looked at other naming programs and funds in statute, I **found longer titles** like the "Douglas J. J. Peters Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts Scholarship Fund" ... and it has worked well while providing honor to the individuals.

This bill is about **honoring a fellow member** of the General Assembly who **gave far more to it, than he ever wanted in return**.

Former Senate President Mike Miller served both in the **House of Delegates and the Senate** where he became the longest serving State Senate President in America.

His accomplishments would take too long to detail but I wanted to share a little of my interaction with him.

I **served with Mike for 13 years** and he was senate president when I first arrived in Annapolis.

I was **greener than green in the ways of politics** and probably was a **thorn in his side** for my first few years considering my initial mentors. However, over time as I watched him and learned, he gained my respect as I matured in the Senate.

Even if we **disagreed on issues at times**, we became friends in the political arena to point where I could ask his advice, and he'd freely give it.

Early on, as a gesture of good will, I started sending him those **nice little Christmas gift boxes** of cheese, nuts, candies and cakes to his house. A couple years later, he teased me saying “*I just want you to know, that I always had my wife taste them first to make sure you didn’t poison them*”.

He was a character!

I quickly learned that Mike had a **passion for his family, the senate** and making sure we left the world a better place than we found it.

Mike taught me what it meant to be a senator:

- Being respectful of each other
- Honoring the institution
- Work for the betterment of the people, and
- To always learn from history as it tends to repeat itself.

He would often say, “**I know my history**, I can tell you what is going to happen in this situation before it happens.”

He was right, more often than not!

One of his many initiatives he championed 15 years ago was the “Chesapeake Conservation Corps Program”. There have been additions and tweaks to the program, but by and large, it’s still the program he created.

Most recently, it’s **duties and funding were updated** in the “Climate Solutions Now Act”, so one of the changes in this bill is to **better reflect the program’s purpose** by adding the word ‘climate’ in its title.

The other change, is of course, is to add’ **Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr.**’ to the title as it depicted his love for the environment and education.

Back in 2020, we rightly honored **former Speaker Busch** by creating the “**Michael Erin Busch Sports Fund**” in Maryland law. This bill works to honor Mike Miller in our statutes as well.

For these reasons, I ask for your favorable consideration.

Testimony for renaming CCC for TVMM.pdf

Uploaded by: Melanie Miller

Position: FAV

Riley Cassidy

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February 4, 2025**Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

Senator Brian J Feldman – Senator Cheryl C. Kagan
Maryland Senate
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Written Testimony in Support of Bill SBOO73

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Riley Cassidy, and I am a proud granddaughter of Senate Emeritus Thomas V. Mike Miller Jr. and a Consultant at Guidehouse. I am writing to express my support for Senate Bill SB0073, Renaming the Chesapeake Conservation Corps Program.

It is an incredible honor to share written remarks today as we recognize and rename the Chesapeake Bay Conservation Corps in honor of my grandfather, my PopPop as family calls him, Senate President Emeritus Thomas V. Mike Miller Jr. My grandfather dedicated his life to Maryland, and nothing was closer to his heart than the Chesapeake Bay—the ‘Jewel of the Chesapeake,’ as he always called it.

Today, I have the privilege of submitting testimony on behalf of his 16 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, as well as our beloved grandmother, Patti Miller. My grandfather's legacy is characterized by service, leadership, and a steadfast dedication to the Chesapeake Bay. We take immense pride in witnessing his vision continue through this program.

As a proud alumna of the Chesapeake Bay Conservation Corps, I had the opportunity to work with the National Wildlife Federation, where I learned firsthand about the critical importance of green spaces in urban environments. My experience reinforced what my grandfather always believed—that conservation isn't just about protecting the Bay, but also about ensuring that every community, no matter where it is, has access to nature, clean water, and a healthier environment.

For me, the Conservation Corps was not only a place to gain invaluable skills but also a way to make lasting friendships with people who share my passion for conservation, the Bay, activism, and the environment. It is a program that unites people with a common purpose, just as my PopPop envisioned when he established the program in 2010.

He created this program to inspire and empower the next generation of environmental stewards. Today, as we rename it in his honor, we ensure that his vision endures—guiding young leaders who will continue to protect and preserve the Chesapeake Bay for generations to come.

On behalf of my family and in loving memory of my PopPop, thank you for this meaningful tribute. I know he would be incredibly proud!

Sincerely, Riley Cassidy

Senate Bill 73_Suzanne Sullivan_Written Testimony.

Uploaded by: Suzanne Sullivan

Position: FAV

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

Suzanne Sullivan
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Suite 301
Easton, MD 21601

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.