



CBF submits the enclosed testimony from students urging the Committee’s favorable report on SB 882 Operating Budget - Education Programs - Mandated Funding.

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Amelia Farrell
Freshman at Anne Arundel Community College
Graduate of Annapolis HS International Bacculaureate
Anne Arundel County

My name is Amelia Farrell and I'm a graduate of Annapolis High School's International Bacculaureate Program. For over half my time in high school, I was involved with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation as a part of their Student Leadership Program. My first experience with the Bay Foundation was going on a fall trip to Tangier Island- a tiny island in the Bay off the coast of Crisfield, Maryland. During that trip, a group of about 20 kids and I learned about the people and culture of Tangier Island itself, how to lead a tree planting, and just enjoyed time in nature. While this may not sound too life-changing, it was the exact opposite for me. This first trip I took with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation completely changed my outlook on the environment of Maryland and the Chesapeake Bay itself. I had gained a grand value and appreciation for environmental education and the protection of the natural beauty of Maryland.

CBF has provided countless environmental education experiences across Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia for students, and every experience I participated in provided me new, valuable information that I have taken in and used to better myself and the world around me.

What's so valuable about these programs is that they are truly building passionate leaders dedicated to bettering Maryland and the world. Through those experiences, students have developed the skills to advocate for causes and educate others, but also learned how to navigate the world for ourselves. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation doesn't tell students what to think they give us information, share data, and allow us opportunities to learn through hands on experience, which is the most important aspect of all. By exploring the Bay, its forests, farms, and streams, seeing Bay creatures up close to learn about them, and talking directly with both scientists and watermen, we are able to learn so much more than we ever would have sitting in a classroom. These vital opportunities are needed to support both education about the Bay and how to be a responsible and well-rounded individual.

For example, in the fall of 2019 I gave a presentation with another Student Leader from Pennsylvania and CBF's Student Leadership Coordinators at the Chesapeake Bay Alliance Watershed Forum, sharing how the Student Leadership Program works. We presented to restoration and education professionals, including teachers from Maryland, DC, Pennsylvania, and Virginia about how they can incorporate environmental education and youth leadership into their work. Our session was an hour and a half long, most of the respondents said their favorite part was that they

were able to hear directly from the students who were involved. Without my prior environmental education experiences with CBF, I would not have had the courage or professionalism to speak at that event. Again, the Student Leadership Program is unique and valuable because it combines learning about the Chesapeake Bay, this amazing and hugely important natural resource, with actual life skills, like public speaking, social and event organization, and civic engagement- standing up for what you believe in.

Unfortunately, my time as a high school Student Leader with CBF has come to an end, but my passion for protecting and preserving the environment has only grown. When I was filling out my college applications and had to list my intended major, it wasn't even a thought to list anything else but Environmental Studies. During my time with CBF, I was introduced to so many different ways to restore and protect the Bay, but I was hooked after my first community advocacy experience. I truly felt like I was making a difference when I talked to my local legislators about why they should support legislation that protects the environment, and the Bay as a result. I want my career to be dedicated to environmental protection in governance because that is where I truly believe change can be most effective. I was a passionate, determined person before my time in the Student Leadership Program, but now, thanks to the dozens of environmental education opportunities provided to me by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, I can use my skills for something bigger than me.

Please support the restoration of CBF's state Funding for Educational Organizations so that CBF can continue to offer these important experiences to students across the state.

Sincerely,

Amelia Farrell

Emily Pietrowski
633 Andrew Hill Road
Arnold, MD 21012
Broadneck High School

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Education Programs have given me opportunities to get outside I wouldn't have without. Getting outside is vital to learning about the environment, as it becomes more engaging and makes deeper connections than what a student could get in the classroom. I love working and learning with CBF as I can learn about our local environment. In the classroom, students may learn about what is happening in different countries, but CBF allows students to be hands-on in the environment that they live in. They can see the good and the bad of the Bay, which is such an amazing experience.

A time that I was working with CBF's Education Programs was when I visited one of the buildings for a career panel. My class got there and we walked around on the beach for a bit before heading inside to hear stories about different people who work at CBF and their jobs. We got snacks, heard stories, got to pin paper oysters with our take-aways on a fake oyster reef ball, and get up and walk around to talk to the panelists we heard from. After our thoughts, we were able to learn about how the building was sustainable, and I had amazing conversations with people who worked at CBF about soil erosion and acidification in the Bay. The next year, I was one of the speakers at this event, sharing my experience as a Chesapeake Bay Foundation Student Leader. Not only did this event inspire me to join CBF, but CBF taught me how much I could grow and positively impact the environment in my own way.

The programs are important as they give students a way to learn about new ways to save our planet. So many students are passionate about the environment but do not know where to start, CBF helps with that. CBF learning programs give new and engaging ways for students to learn about what is happening in their backyard. It is so important for students to think global and act local, and the CBF learning programs give them a path to do that.

Please support the restoration of CBF's state Funding for Educational Organizations so that CBF can continue to offer these important experiences to students across the state.

Sincerely,

Emily Pietrowski

Havana Mullaly
637 Maid Marion Rd.
Annapolis, Maryland 21405
Indian Creek High School

Hello, my name is Havana Mullaly, and I am a high school junior at Indian Creek High School. CBF's Environmental Education Programs are important to me because I have grown in my knowledge about how to help the environment through presentations that were given by the educational programs and through CBF's summer programs.

I enjoy working and learning with CBF because I have found a community of likeminded people who love the environment as much as I do. The Student Leadership Program at CBF is one of 6 environmental education programs in the state of Maryland and without this program I will lose so many great opportunities to help the environment. I am also a part of the Watershed Outdoor Bill of Rights team that is a part of the CBF Student Leaders program. Being a part of this team has made an impact on my life because I have grown in my public speaking and advocacy skills. I am looking forward to presenting the Watershed Outdoor Bill of Rights at a Youth Environmental Movement meeting, and without the guidance of CBF's education program, I will not be able to do this.

It is critical that all of CBF's Environmental Education Programs continue because it is empowering youth like me to get involved with saving the environment while learning in a safe environment. **Please support the restoration of CBF's state Funding for Educational Organizations so that CBF can continue to offer these important experiences to students across the state.**

Thank you,

Havana

Zoe Burke
607 Bellerive Court
Arnold, MD 21012
St. Mary's Annapolis High School

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation Environmental Education Programs are important to me because I care about the future of our environment. The programs provide informative and accessible ways to learn about the environmental issues impacting my community at the local and state level, as well as the environmental threats facing our nation and world.

One CBF program that has impacted my life is the Student Leadership Program. Participating in this program is a way for me to honor my dad who passed away last year. My dad enjoyed the natural world and we did many environmental activities together like going to Sandy Point Park, Bethany Beach, and canoeing in the Severn River. The Student Leadership Program is helping me to gain knowledge on how to be a lifelong advocate for the environment. I like working and learning with CBF because I know I am making a difference.

Please support the restoration of CBF's state Funding for Educational Organizations so that CBF can continue to offer these important experiences to students across the state.

Thank you very much,

Zoe Burke

Emma Bisson
3 Foxway Terrace
Towson MD, 21286
Towson High School

My name is Emma Bisson, and I am a junior at Towson High School. In the spring of 2020, I joined the CBF Student Leadership education program. Since then, this experience has had a profound impact on me as an environmentalist, as a leader, and as an individual. The CBF education programs provide valuable opportunities to students across the Chesapeake Bay watershed. **I humbly ask that you restore funding for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation Environmental Education programs, so that these programs can continue to support future student leaders.**

It was the beginning of the pandemic when I was accepted to participate in the July student leadership masterclass as a Maryland student leader. That summer, several other camps, internships, and jobs that I had applied to were cancelled. To my surprise and happiness, the CBF education program did not cancel, but rather it adapted to a virtual setting. Even before I had participated in the summer leadership expedition, I was amazed by the dedication of CBF to providing educational programs to students, even when faced with seemingly insurmountable challenges. This determination to educate, support, and empower students across the watershed is what makes the CBF education programs such an important opportunity for students.

Beginning with that summer expedition and through the rest of 2020, I have learned how to be an environmental activist. The CBF education programs have improved my public speaking skills and expanded my knowledge of the environment through experiential learning. Yet perhaps most importantly, these programs have allowed me to develop an openness to diverse perspectives. I have met many other student leaders through the summer expedition and monthly meetings and confluences. While we each share a similar goal of saving the bay and those who call it home, we each have unique experiences that influence our perspectives. It is through getting to know these students that I have developed a deep appreciation of and respect for all opinions, regardless of whether they coincide with my own beliefs. Leadership skills, education, and open-mindedness are all vital skills that are gained through the CBF education programs.

CBF education programs both inspire a passion for the environment and provide the tools necessary to advocate for the environment. Beyond the foundational knowledge of the environment and how it relates to our communities, these programs empower individuals to promote positive change. These programs provide support, while encouraging initiative. From working to form a Watershed Outdoor Bill of Rights, to drafting letters to representatives, to planning a project to

educate my community about monarch butterflies, the student leadership program has inspired me to advocate for change in ways I could not have imagined. My hope is that other students can experience the same spark of activism that comes with the dedication and support of the educators and fellow students of the student leadership program.

Please support the restoration of CBF's state Funding for Educational Organizations so that CBF can continue to offer these important experiences to students across the state. The CBF Education Programs are an opportunity for all high school students to develop leadership and life skills. They open the doors to connections that inspire collaboration and inclusiveness. The CBF Education programs inspire students to enact the change they hope to see in the world.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Emma Bisson

Annie Fang
13309 Cleveland Drive
Rockville, MD 20850
Poolesville High School

Although I've only just joined this Chesapeake Bay Foundation Student Leadership Program this past summer, it has changed my everyday life. I've met so many amazing students and friends from all over the watershed who share the same passion as me. Without this program, there is no doubt that I would've never met these amazing, kind, human beings that I hold so much love for today.

This group of environmentally motivated students isn't just a group that cares only about trees and global warming. They genuinely care about you as a whole. What's been going on in your life, give you school and homework advice, and become lifelong friends. I know that the people I meet here are uniquely extraordinary.

This program has changed me so much. I've even started my own club and contrary to what most people would do, they have actively helped me to promote my club at every meeting and keep checking in on me to see how my club is running. The student leadership program is in short to say- the best group of people I've met. Everyone is so kind and welcoming, and I really hope those after me can meet another group of amazing, kind, and environmentally aware students as I have!

Please support the restoration of CBF's state Funding for Educational Organizations so that CBF can continue to offer these important experiences to students across the state.

Thank you!

Annie

Cindy Pham
18916 Festival Drive
Boys, MD 20841
Poolesville High School

CBF's Environmental Education Programs are important to me because they have helped hundreds of students meet others who have similar passions and helped them to make something of it. You can grow on that interest with others and the educators are always really helpful. I enjoy being a part of CBF and learning in the Student Leadership Program because I learned more about myself, I met some amazing people, I was able to do some things that I didn't think I could do, and I could help spread awareness and hold fundraisers for environmental issues.

I joined CBF last year, but due to COVID, I was limited in what I could do. However, I remember the first time I talked with older student leaders. It was on Poolesville Day, where we had a booth for our club, and gave out brochures and other items to promote CBF. These leaders inspired me to look into how I can help. I think these moments pushed me a little more out of my comfort zone, in a good way, to do things that I originally would have probably declined. So yes, it is important to me that these programs are continued to be offered because I'm sure there are other people like me, who could go on to do things that they are passionate about, with guiding and teammates. It could be life changing.

Please support the restoration of CBF's state Funding for Educational Organizations so that CBF can continue to offer these important experiences to students across the state.

Sincerely,

Cindy

Connor Ransom
17220 General Custer Way
Poolesville, MD 20837
Poolesville High School

Hello, I am Connor Ransom, a senior at Poolesville High School in Poolesville, Maryland, and I am writing to you today to voice my **support for the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's State Aided Institution funding.**

I have had the amazing opportunity to participate in the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Environmental Education Programs numerous times. I have been on five school field trips with CBF, three of them overnight trips to their island centers, as well as one summer trip to Fox Island, and countless other experiences and events through the Student Leadership Program. I have always found CBF's education programs to be incredibly effective, not just teaching me, but helping me retain the information, getting me excited about environmental education, and encouraging me to stay involved, learn more, and have a positive impact on my community.

Every experience I have had with CBF has been fantastic, from the expert educators to the amazingly fun lessons. Teaching environmental education in the classroom can certainly be effective and is undoubtedly essential, but seeing oysters in a video just can't compare to being on a boat and actively looking through a fresh catch to learn about oysters, biodiversity, and the importance of oyster reefs to the health of the Bay. While the excitement CBF gives to education is incredible, I think there's an even more important part about their education programs. CBF doesn't just teach kids about the environment, they give them powerful life skills which help develop them into deep thinkers, good researchers, strong leaders, and effective advocates.

CBF has always given me the tools to learn about and fight for the issues I care about, and to me that is the best part of CBF education and what sets it apart from any other education I have had. CBF has better equipped me to make decisions about what is important, develop solutions to issues in my community, and voice my opinion to both my peers and my elected officials. Every student in Maryland deserves to be able to experience the same amazing education opportunities I have. **Please support the restoration of CBF's state Funding for Educational Organizations so that CBF can continue to offer these important experiences to students across the state.**

Sincerely,

Connor Ransom

Hannah Fox
6402 Ridge Drive
Bethesda, MD 20816
Walt Whitman High School

My name is Hannah Fox. I'm a 9th grader at Walt Whitman High School. Just recently, I became a part of the Student Leadership Program at the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. I have already learned so much more about the local environment even in the virtual format. I have gotten to attend inspiring meetings with other student leaders from Maryland, hear from scientists, meet student leaders from all over the region, gain a better understanding of state government, receive guidance to start a club at my school focused on conserving the Bay, and have had the opportunity to share my voice about the importance of taking action to protect the environment. Coming up, I am so excited to receive training to improve my advocacy skills and be able to go on summer expeditions once it is safe to do so.

Like so many others, I haven't been able to go to school because of the pandemic. I haven't been able to go to band competitions. I haven't been able to try out for school sports teams. But I have been able to get involved in the CBF Student Leader Program. It has opened doors for me that I didn't know existed. This program is so important to so many students, which is why state funding is so critical. If you stop supporting CBF education programs, you stop supporting the students who are passionate about advocating for the environment.

Please support the restoration of CBF's state Funding for Educational Organizations so that CBF can continue to offer these important experiences to students across the state.

Thank you,

Hannah Fox



Lillian S. Hsu
11705 Tall Pines Drive
Germantown, Maryland 20876
Poolesville High School

My experiences with CBF's Environmental Education Programs have expanded my worldview beyond just my neighborhood in northern Montgomery County. As someone who has lived in Maryland their entire life, I had no idea about the fishing communities or the islands that inhabited the Chesapeake Bay until my first CBF bay trip with my high school. It taught me that there was more to our state than just what I could see in my suburban neighborhood. The decisions made and policies created must take into account the different communities across the state, from the rural parts of western Maryland to the coastal areas on the eastern shore.

Our unique access to the Chesapeake Bay is a treasure to our state. Yet there are many people that take it for granted or are not even aware of the impact it has on our lives. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation and their environmental education programs are crucial in promoting environmental literacy and protecting our Bay.

These programs provide education to our next generation of leaders and opportunities for them to lead and create a positive impact on our community. The hands-on experiences teach them about the world we inhabit and how to protect the environment we have learned to love.

Please support the restoration of CBF's state Funding for Educational Organizations so that CBF can continue to offer these important experiences to students across the state.

Sincerely,

Lillian

Olisaneme Okonkwo
First Year at Harvard University
Graduate of Poolesville High School Global Ecology Program
Montgomery County

Education, how and what we teach students has always been a hot topic. There are many critiques and concerns. Are we spending enough? Are we investing in the right places? Some claim that what's being taught in school isn't preparing students for the real-world. How can we teach the most valuable lessons that will create active, hardworking, and informed citizens ready to address the many problems we face as a society? Environmental Education is the answer. It is the foundation of a well-rounded education. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Environmental Education Programs have fundamentally transformed my life. I wasn't really an outdoorsy person growing up, but thanks to CBF, I now prefer to be outside. CBF has given me the opportunity to learn about myself and my environment. When I learned about the challenges facing our watershed, CBF gave me the tools to take action and surrounded me with individuals who stemmed from a variety of backgrounds, but all had the same goal in mind: working together to solve the complex challenges facing our Bay, our economy, our communities.

My CBF Student Leadership experiences taught me that I can make a difference in the world, even as a teenager. If you want students who have been taught the importance of citizenship and who understand that their actions have consequences, then environmental education is essential. In this ever-changing world, creativity, and ability to take initiative are integral qualities of a successful citizenry. While school can certainly teach students a great amount of information, it is experiences that teach skills and form mindsets. No classroom is comparable to the outdoors. Even through the lens of a traditional education, the opportunities when learning outside are endless. History, government, biology, chemistry, engineering, and human health are also subjects in the environmental debate. The environment provides a path to engage and teach students about all aspects of the world around them. Experience trumps book work. Why learn about the Bay, oysters, and rockfish through a textbook or webpage when I can see the Bay with my own eyes, feel the coarse shell of an oyster, and watch the squirming, scaly rockfish shimmer in the sunlight. Through CBF's Environmental Education Programs, I learned about these flora and fauna not through pages of a book, but through catching them myself and holding them in my own hands. If given the choice between these two ways of learning about the Bay, I definitely prefer the latter.

I am but one of the hundreds of thousands of Maryland students who have fallen in love the Bay on CBF Environmental Education experiences, and I am here to represent their voices, too. When I served as President of Poolesville High School's

Chesapeake Bay Coalition, I saw students willingly use their time and energy to help restore the Bay, inspired to learn more about their local environment. I led an invasive species removal at a Montgomery County Park in my community followed by a native species planting a few weeks later. Fellow CBF student leaders and members of the Chesapeake Bay Coalition showed up to volunteer. All of these individuals were empowered and become active citizens due to their environmental education and experiences with CBF. I have carried my passion for protecting and persevering the outdoors with me to college and have recently applied to be a leader in the Harvard First-Year Outdoor Program to help create experiences just like those I've had with CBF. The Bay has given me experiences that I will never forget, and if you invest in Environmental Education, it can continue to do that for young people like me and countless others in the future.

Please support the restoration of CBF's state Funding for Educational Organizations so that CBF can continue to offer these important experiences to students across the state.

Sincerely,

Olisaneme Okonkwo

Saatchi Barochia
13640 Glenhurst Rd
North Potomac, MD 20878
Poolesville High School

CBF's Environmental Education Programs have allowed me to pursue whatever facets of environmental activism I'm passionate about; whether being environmental justice or climate reform. The diversity in programs cater to students of all learning profiles - on field-based trips I can learn interactively and hands-on about the different ecosystems of the Bay while in-classroom visits from professionals in a plethora of scientific areas bring the watershed directly to me.

The health of our planet has been a concern to me since I was little - but my trip to Kenya a couple years ago only exacerbated this worry as I saw first-hand the extreme effects of urbanization and climate change. My field trip to Smith Island through the Foundation kickstarted my advocacy journey in middle school, which I've pursued through my high school's Global Ecology Studies Program and county-wide Student Government Association as a CBF Liaison - connecting driven students from across the region to CBF educators and programs. When another student asks me how to begin in the intimidating world of activism, I refer them straight to CBF - because chances are, whatever issue resonates with them is intersectional with something the organization strives for. They've shown me how to take responsibility for my impact on the environment, refined my leadership skills, and taught me how to take into account multiple perspectives when working toward a solution.

It is vital these programs continue to be offered. They are an outlet for brilliant and creative ideas through which a community of like-minded individuals who care deeply about the preservation of natural spaces for future generations can incite meaningful change.

Please support the restoration of CBF's state Funding for Educational Organizations so that CBF can continue to offer these important experiences to students across the state.

Thanks,

Saatchi Barochia

Sophia Ashley Liang
14183 Travilah Rd
Rockville, MD 20850
Poolesville High School

The first time I ever heard about CBF's Student Leadership Program, one of their 6 Environmental Education Programs offered in Maryland, was from my 9th grade biology teacher. She spoke about how you had the opportunity to go on summer expeditions on islands in the Bay, and meet new people from all over the watershed. I knew right away that I had to sign up and that was the first thing I did when I got home. Weeks later, I received an email of my acceptance from the program coordinator and an invitation to their upcoming summer expeditions. That year though, they were going to be run virtually due to COVID. So although I wasn't going to be able to get the full in-person experience of visiting the islands and riding boats through the Bay, I still took up the opportunity and spent two weeks of my summer learning all about environmental advocacy and the health of the watershed - from riparian buffers to heat islands and from oysters to birds.

I enjoyed every second I spent on the virtual expeditions where I met other students passionate about the environment and cultivated my love, appreciation, and concern for the Chesapeake Bay. It is because of CBF and their Student Leadership Program that I have the chance to advance how I can advocate for, raise awareness about, and take action to save the Bay. Without CBF's Environmental Education Programs like this one, I, and so many other students like me, wouldn't get to gain the knowledge and awareness about the environment that we live in and interact with every day. We also wouldn't be able to find the same opportunities like letter writing and tree planting that CBF offers us to empower us to protect our environment.

CBF's Student Leadership Program has impacted me in so many ways, one of the biggest ways is making my voice heard. From all my treasured experiences in the outdoors - hiking, fishing, camping, white water rafting, and much more - I have developed deep care for keeping the environment healthy and protected so that I and the rest of the residents on this planet can continue to make one-of-a-kind memories immersed in nature. Advocating for environmental legislation is invaluable to fighting for this environment that I care so much about. I still remember the very first letter I sent to my Senator as a thank you for his support for passing the American Conservation Enhancement Act. Then two months later, I received a reply from his office and to this day I still can't believe that my email - among the hundreds of other emails, letters, and postcards he probably receives on a daily basis - was read and replied to. I felt grateful knowing that my words that communicated my support for environmental protection were acknowledged by my Senator.

With the hope that I can continue expressing my support for environmental legislation and influencing my representatives to support what I believe in, I take up as many advocacy opportunities that CBF shares with me as I can. It truly is something that I want to use my voice to make a difference in. Not only do CBF's Environmental Education Programs provide me with these resources, but the program coordinators help and encourage me along the entire way, which is why I am always appreciative of their support.

Please support the restoration of CBF's state Funding for Educational Organizations so that CBF can continue to offer these important experiences to students across the state. Through CBF's Environmental Education Programs, I am able to learn more about advocacy opportunities, connect with other students who share my passion, and take the initiative to save the environment that I am so fortunate to be able to protect.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Sophia Ashley Liang
Phone: 240-550-2215