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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