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February 24, 2021

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
House Office Building Room 251
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Dana Stein, Vice Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
House Office Building Room 251
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Barve and Vice Chair Stein,

On behalf of Chesapeake Conservancy, I would like to express our support for HB 1267 which would establish a workgroup on public water access in the State of Maryland.

As you know, the Chesapeake Bay, along with the Bay's rivers and tributaries, represents one of Maryland's greatest and most treasured natural resources. In addition to policy and funding efforts to restore and protect the Chesapeake Bay, it is critical that we also work to increase and improve public water access to the Bay and its tributaries. In fact, increasing public water access points is a core goal of the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement as a means to benefit the public and local economies and to inspire people to become conservation stewards.


Outdoor recreation and public water access are particularly important from an economic perspective. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, outdoor recreation in Maryland contributes more than \$7 billion annually in value-added to the economy, directly employing nearly 90,000 with nearly \$4 billion in compensation. Boating and fishing in Maryland are the biggest activities contributing to this economic impact.

Chesapeake Conservancy, together with partners like the National Park Service, has been working diligently to create new public access points and to create new opportunities for outdoor recreation in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The substantial growth in demand by Marylanders for parks and outdoor recreation has amplified the need for more public water access points. Furthermore, there is an imminent need to create public water access points and to support recreational opportunities in underserved communities.

HB 1267 would appropriately respond to this need by establishing a workgroup on public water access which will convene a diverse group of stakeholders to consider means of improving public water access and to provide recommendations to the Maryland General Assembly. This legislation is also timely, as the Chesapeake Bay community nears the 2025 deadline for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement.

Thank you for considering this important legislation, and I urge your support for HB 1267.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

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 Joel Dunn
 President and CEO
 Chesapeake Conservancy

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