

Honorable Members,

We live in such a beautiful state and clean water is the lifeblood that powers our health, our tourism, recreation, industry and occupations that water dependent. After a greater than 10-year effort, two Gloucester waterways were awarded the No Discharge designation by the Environmental Protection Agency and our state Dept. of Environmental Quality, Sarah's Creek and the Perrin River. We have so many shellfish grounds to protect in this area and wish to expand this designation to other regional waterways. In Hampton Roads, land subsidence and sea level rise combine to make our ocean and Bay-front communities vulnerable to rising waters. The allocation of \$200 million to the Resilient Virginia Revolving Loan Fund, which provides loans or grants to finance resilience projects is important, but I also urge you to keep Virginia in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, also known as RGGI, so that our localities can continue to receive grants and loans awarded through the Community Flood Preparedness Fund. To date, localities within the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission have received over \$51 million dollars in grants and loans. The Middle Peninsula received a small amount of money from this allocation; please help us develop the plans to put in place for funding consideration similar to some groups that are working with the Valley and Southside.

The 2025 deadline for Virginia and other Bay states to meet their clean up goals will occur during Governor Youngkin's administration. Please provide the funding through this budget process for clean water practices that meet pollution reduction goals identified in Virginia's Watershed Implementation Plan – the Commonwealth's commitment to reduce excess nutrients that flow to the Bay and create dead zones where nothing can live.

- Support Funding for Farm Conservation Programs – we get so much bang for the clean-up buck through helping farmers keep pollutants out of our waterways. CBF's recently-released economic report shows that for every dollar spent helping farmers adopt practices that improve water quality in the Bay and its tributaries, the Bay region would see \$1.75 in higher sales and earnings. Not only that, but this investment would also support an average of 6,673 full-time, part-time, and seasonal jobs a year through 2025. You can read the report by visiting cbf.org/agriculture.
- Support Funding for the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund-- Localities are working hard to reduce polluted runoff into streams and the Bay, but they require support from the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF) to continue these efforts. SLAF provides matching grants to localities for projects that reduce polluted runoff, such as stream restoration, rain gardens, and other retrofits. To meet our Bay clean-up goals, it is estimated that the SLAF program needs \$50 million in this year's budget.
- Support Virginia's Fisheries - Freshwater mussels are an important part of Virginia's natural heritage. They benefit streams and rivers by filtering water and removing pollutants. These valuable organisms have shown rapid decline, and investments and strategies are needed to protect and restore these populations. During the 2022 legislative session, the General Assembly allocated funds for development of a statewide mussel restoration plan. Legislators can further advance mussel populations by allocating \$2 million to the Virginia Fisheries and Aquatic Wildlife Center to support its hands-on mussel replenishment efforts. In 2022, the Virginia Marine Resources Commission and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources released the results of their Blue Crab Winter Dredge Survey, an annual estimate of the population of blue crabs in the Bay and its tributaries. The 2022 survey estimated total crab

abundance at 227 million, the lowest in the survey's 33-year history. Low numbers impact not only people who like to eat crabs, but also Virginia's commercial blue crab fishery, which has an annual harvest value ranging from \$22 to \$38 million. Fisheries regulators and scientists must work quickly to identify the key ecosystem challenges influencing the survival of young blue crabs so they can be addressed to ensure a healthy blue crab population in the future. Please consider the allocation of \$225,000 to conduct a more robust blue crab stock assessment.

I retired after a 20 year career with DEQ and 10 years with other agencies, devoting my work life to protecting clean water. It was never just a job, and from my current interactions with that agency, I think the staff there now feel similarly. So many people that were there with me for getting the Clean Water Act implemented and putting nutrient controls in place have retired. Current staff are mostly relatively new hires. Please encourage state employee retention practices and staff development to help them gain the experience to carry out this important work. People in the regulated community have commented to me that they have seen improvements in water quality over their lifetime from our efforts and that made the day-to-day grind of working through austerity budgets, potential lay-offs, arbitrary rules, constant documentation of everything, and other minutiae that made my work worthwhile.

Thank you for your consideration of weighting highly critical clean water protections in this upcoming budget process.

Respectfully,

Denise Mosca

6977 Ark Road

Gloucester, Va. 23061

imdmosca@gmail.com