



CHESAPEAKE BAY COMMISSION

Policy for the Bay • www.chesbay.us

May 14, 2021

Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We are writing to call to your attention an urgent need related to national efforts to restore the Chesapeake Bay. In order to reach our 2025 Chesapeake Bay Partnership pollution reduction goals, it is imperative that additional agricultural conservation practices be implemented in the watershed. As the U.S. Department of Agriculture is a key partner agency to the Bay agreement, we are writing to enlist your assistance in delivering additional resources to meet these goals.

We have attached a policy paper proposing the creation of a Chesapeake Resilient Farms Initiative (CRFI). We modeled the proposal after the Mississippi River Basin Initiative (MRBI), which was created during your prior service as Secretary of Agriculture. A dedicated Chesapeake Bay initiative is needed because approximately 85 percent of the pollution reductions required by our 2025 deadline must come from agriculture and forestry. Without additional resources from our federal partners to assist farmers in the Bay watershed, we will not meet our goals.

As you may recall, the Chesapeake Bay Commission is a signatory to the Chesapeake Bay Agreement and serves as the legislative voice for the states of Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. There is strong support for the creation of the CRFI among our membership from all the states and we are working closely with other organizations committed to Bay restoration such as the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and the Choose Clean Water Coalition. The Commission's leadership would very much welcome the opportunity to meet with you and other senior leaders of the Department to discuss the proposal and we look forward to working with you to fully restore the Chesapeake Bay.

Thank you for your consideration. We hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Delegate David Bulova (VA)
Chairman

Senator Guy Guzzone (MD)
Vice Chairman

Senator Gene Yaw (PA)
Vice Chairman

cc: Robert Bonnie