



Citizens Advisory Committee

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August 8, 2022

The Honorable Michael S. Regan
U.S. EPA Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460
send via email regan.michael@epa.gov

Dear Administrator Regan,

As chair of the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) to the Chesapeake Bay Executive Council, I am writing to you as Chair of the Executive Council to request your help in providing the means for more inclusive participation of stakeholders in our activities. CAC is committed to meaningful inclusion of all members in their role as advisors to the leadership of the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP). We represent a variety of stakeholders across the watershed. At our May quarterly meeting we continued to discuss the Bay partnerships' commitment to advance diversity, equity, inclusion and justice (DEIJ), including what that means for how the CAC itself operates and centers the values of DEIJ. Our members believe there is an opportunity now to help advance the CBP's commitments to DEIJ by providing stipends to qualifying volunteers of the Advisory Committees and Chesapeake Bay Program workgroup members who are not paid by their jobs to participate.

The CAC strongly supports the August 2020 Chesapeake Executive Council (EC) *Statement in Support of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice*, where the following commitments are articulated:

- “The Chesapeake Bay Program partners believe the full diversity of people who live, work and recreate in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed have a right to benefit from, **and help guide**, the future of an environmentally and economically sustainable Chesapeake Bay watershed...”
- The partnership commits to “Foster a culture of inclusion, respect and mutual learning by leading organizational change and **empowering new voices** and perspectives in our outreach, engagement and internal decision-making.”
- Furthermore, it is stated the partnership will, “Ensure the benefits of our science, restoration and **partnership programs** are distributed in a fair and equitable manner without adverse, disproportionate impacts on vulnerable populations, especially those of lower economic status, indigenous, historically underrepresented communities and people of color.”

Sixteen of the 28 members of the CAC are appointed by the Governors of Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania and the Mayor of DC. To help ensure broad geographic and diverse perspectives, twelve members are appointed by the Board of the Directors of the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, which also provides staff support to the CAC through a grant from EPA. Our members' perspectives represent their experience from agriculture, development, government, watershed organizations, restoration practitioners, philanthropy, and community and justice advocates.



Jessica M. Blackburn, CAC Coordinator
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The volunteer nature of the advisory committee tends to favor participation from environmental professionals, employees with company pro bono paid time off, or retirees. Members who do not fall into those categories often must take personal time off from their jobs to participate in committee work. This unintentional bias limits the ability of full participation from small nonprofits, community advocates and grassroots organizations, particularly those led by BIPOC members.

If our request for stipend funds is awarded, we would use it to establish volunteer time support (of, for example, \$3,500 each per year) for seven members, or 25% of the CAC membership, who qualify. The volunteer stipend program aims to lower a common barrier to meaningful collaboration often heard from a diversity of Chesapeake watershed stakeholders – i.e., the financial sacrifice of unpaid volunteer time.

CAC members who qualify for volunteer time compensation will have additional time for the internal CAC operations and deliberations; thereby increasing access to CAC decision-making, and CAC leadership positions and opportunities for interaction with CBP leadership. Traditionally, this level of participation has been limited to only the members who can financially afford it. The opportunity to replace wages through paid committee activities will help break down the existing system where only those who can afford to participate are able to give freely of their time to CBP related work, and subsequently create more equitable access to CBP leadership and power.

Additionally, we believe a volunteer stipend program directly addresses the Chesapeake Bay Program's Principals' Staff Committee (PSC) DEIJ Action Statement also issued in August 2020 endorsing the CBP's DEIJ Strategy to Advance DEIJ Internally by, "increasing diversity and inclusion for staff, appointees and volunteer bodies; building a common understanding of, and expanded capacity for, DEIJ; and institutionalizing efforts to advance DEIJ values and practices internally" and Advance DEIJ through Mission-Related Work by, "...incorporating community leaders' input into decision-making and implementation..."

Thank you for considering this request to intentionally uplift the voices of traditionally excluded watershed residents. We would be happy to talk more with you or others you designate to outline our ideas on an economically practical and equitable approach to establishing a new volunteer stipend program.

Respectfully submitted,



Julie Lawson
Chair, Citizens Advisory Committee

cc: Members of the Chesapeake Executive Council
Adam Ortiz, EPA Region 3 Administrator and Chair of the PSC
Dr. Kandis Boyd, Director EPA Chesapeake Bay Program Office