

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 22, 2017

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Udall:

As the Subcommittee develops spending priorities for Fiscal Year 2018, we strongly urge you to reauthorize appropriations for the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Program one year to ensure continued robust funding for its two vital components, the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Grants Assistance Program. We also thank you for your commitment to the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Program for Fiscal Year 2017 of the full National Park Service-requested amount of \$2,020,000. We recommend the following language:

Section 502(c) of the Chesapeake Bay Initiative Act of 1998 (Public Law 105–312; 54 U.S.C. 320101 note) is amended by striking “2017” and inserting “2018.”

Originally authorized as a pilot program in 1998, the Chesapeake Gateways and Watertrails Program set up a network of Chesapeake Bay-related sites, such as parks, wildlife refuges, and trails. Through more than 170 sites, the Gateways Network partner sites and water trails enable visitors to experience authentic places in the Chesapeake Bay. The National Park Service provides matching grants for projects that enhance public education of and access to the Chesapeake Bay. Only sites that have gone through a rigorous review process and been formally selected as part of the Gateway and Watertrails Network are eligible for the competitive grants.

Visitation at Gateways sites exceeds 10 million people annually, and the competitive grants program is oversubscribed every year. Given the importance of forging human connections to the history and ecology of the Chesapeake Bay, it is critical that the federal government continue to be a reliable partner in providing access to the nation's largest estuary. We therefore urge your support for the Chesapeake Bay Initiative by extending the authorization.

Sincerely,



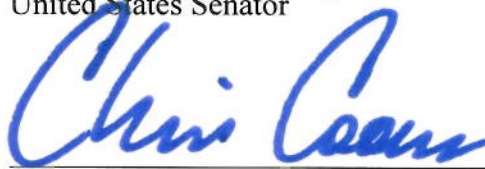
Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



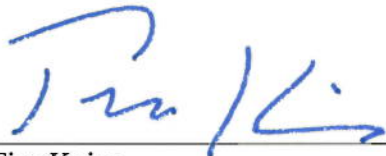
Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



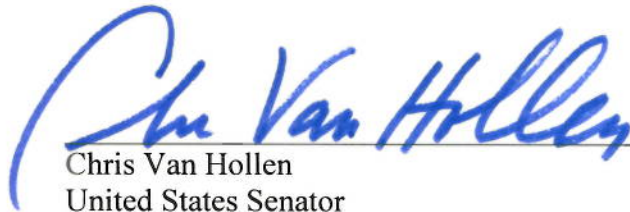
Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator