

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 4, 2013

The Honorable Frank Lucas  
Chairman  
House Committee on Agriculture  
1301 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Collin Peterson  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Agriculture  
1305 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Lucas and Ranking Member Peterson,

We write to thank you for your support of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative in the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 and ask you to continue to fund critical assistance for Bay farmers in any prospective Farm Bill. We support the Title II Regional Conservation Partnership Project framework proposed last year and urge you to include the modified language from the Senate's Agriculture Reform, Food, and Jobs Act of 2012 in whatever legislation you propose this Congress.

This program provides targeted conservation funding for natural resource issues, leverages private resources, and gives particular attention to areas of critical need. It was created by consolidating the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP), Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI), the Chesapeake Bay Program, and the Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil, Erosion and Sediment control. While it streamlines program management, this efficiency should not come at a cost to on-the-ground conservation in areas with particularly difficult resource concerns.

By adopting the Senate version of the program, we can avoid this result. The Senate version provides \$97,615,392 annually to Critical Conservation Areas whereas the House version provides only \$60,328,000 annually. In the Senate version, this amount covers up to 6 Critical Conservation Areas, while the House version covers up to 8. In short, the Senate version provides a higher level of funding to a more targeted number of critical conservation areas.

The Chesapeake Bay faces particularly difficult water quality challenges. The six watershed states and the District of Columbia have committed to meet aggressive regional water quality goals by 2025 in an historic and vitally important cleanup effort. We believe the Senate version of this program in the Agriculture Reform, Food, and Jobs Act of 2012 will provide the targeted Federal support needed to

achieve significant conservation gains in areas of critical need, including the Chesapeake Bay watershed.


Again, we thank you for your support for farmers in this critical conservation region, and look forward to working with you to create the strongest possible program to meet their needs.

Sincerely,

  
CHRIS VAN HOLLEN


  
ROB WITTMAN

  
ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT


  
ANDY HARRIS

  
JOHN CARNEY


  
MATT CARTWRIGHT

  
GERALD E. CONNOLLY

  
ELIJAH CUMMINGS

  
JOHN DELANEY

  
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JOHN SARBANES