September 28, 2026

The Honorable Jen Kiggans
U.S. House of Representatives
152 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Chesapeake Bay Executive Order and the Importance of Local Stormwater Investment

Dear Congresswoman Kiggans:

On behalf of Lynnhaven River NOW, I am writing regarding the September 16 executive order addressing Chesapeake Bay restoration and local stormwater management fees. We appreciate your continued attention to flooding, coastal resilience, and water quality in Virginia's Second Congressional District, and we respectfully ask that you consider the important role locally established stormwater programs play in advancing each of these priorities.

We share the goal of ensuring that Chesapeake Bay investments are effective, measurable, and fiscally responsible. At the same time, we are concerned that characterizing stormwater utility fees simply as "rain taxes" does not reflect the essential services these programs provide to coastal communities.

Virginia Beach's stormwater utility predates the 2009 Chesapeake Bay executive order by sixteen years. Its revenues support drainage infrastructure, flood reduction, water-quality improvements, system maintenance, and compliance with existing stormwater requirements. These are longstanding local needs that remain regardless of changes in federal policy.

Recent flooding across Hampton Roads reinforces the need to maintain and modernize this infrastructure. Intense rainfall can quickly overwhelm roads and drainage systems, threaten homes and businesses, disrupt transportation, and create public-safety risks. In a low-lying coastal region, investments in stormwater management are therefore not only

environmental expenditures; they are investments in resilience and in protecting public and private assets that communities have already spent substantial resources to build.

Your support for federal investment in Bow Creek Stormwater Park in Virginia Beach reflects this reality. Projects such as Bow Creek demonstrate how stormwater infrastructure can reduce flooding risks while providing broader environmental and community benefits.

At its core, protecting residents from flooding and ensuring access to clean, healthy waterways should be shared priorities that transcend partisan differences. Families, businesses, military installations, and local governments all depend on reliable infrastructure and clean water. We believe that common ground provides an opportunity to focus on measurable outcomes, responsible investment, and approaches that have demonstrated value in the communities they serve.

Stormwater management is also closely connected to water quality. The Lynnhaven River's recovery provides a compelling local example. When Lynnhaven River NOW began its work in 2002, only approximately 1% of the river met the stringent water-quality standard necessary for shellfish harvesting. Today, more than half does.

That progress did not result from any single program or organization. It has taken more than two decades of sustained collaboration among residents, businesses, the City of Virginia Beach, state and federal agencies, and nonprofit partners. Stormwater improvements are part of a broader strategy that has also included oyster restoration, wetlands and submerged aquatic vegetation restoration, pollution reduction, and extensive public engagement.

In roughly 25 years, these partnerships have helped transform a river where virtually no waters were open to commercial shellfish harvesting into one where more than half now meet that standard. This is a measurable success for clean water, our coastal economy, and the quality of life Virginia Beach residents enjoy.

We respectfully ask that you continue to closely examine implementation of the September 16 executive order and raise concerns where its implementation could undermine effective, locally established stormwater programs. We also encourage you to highlight successful examples from Virginia’s Second District - including Bow Creek and the recovery of the Lynnhaven River - as evidence that well-designed investments in stormwater management, resilience, and water quality can deliver meaningful and measurable benefits.

Virginia's coastal communities should continue to have the tools necessary to protect residents, infrastructure, existing investments, and waterways while meeting their water-quality responsibilities.

Thank you for your service to Virginia's Second Congressional District and for your continued attention to the needs of coastal Virginia. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue further with you and your staff.

Respectfully,

Dylan Mason // Public Policy Manager // Lynnhaven River NOW