Dear Member of Congress:

We write to urge you to support the *Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network Reauthorization Act of 2017* (S.1430/H.R.3063), a bill to extend the authorization of the successful Chesapeake Bay Gateways program for an additional six years.

Established by Congress in 1998, the Gateways program enhances conservation stewardship by connecting people with the Chesapeake Bay through outdoor recreation opportunities, exhibits and interpretive trail signage, and youth programs. Since 2000, the Gateways program has enabled the National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office to provide more than $13 million in financial and technical assistance for more than 300 projects in communities in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. These funds have been matched at least dollar for dollar, resulting in improved Bay access for everyone and fueling the growth of a thriving outdoor recreation industry across the Chesapeake states and Washington, D.C.

Outdoor recreation is one of the region’s most significant economic sectors. According to the Outdoor Industry Association, outdoor recreation has a large impact on the states that comprise the Chesapeake watershed. In the Chesapeake region, employers in recreation and tourism support over 820,800 jobs and over $13 billion in income each year.

Since 2000, the Gateways program has helped to connect people to the Chesapeake Bay and to provide outdoor recreation and education opportunities. In total, the National Park Service has used the Gateways programs to create or improve 43 public kayak and canoe launches. Gateways funding has also supported trail signage to inform paddlers and visitors about Chesapeake Bay history and wildlife, and it has supported youth programs to get kids out on the water. The American Canoe Association supports public access and believes that the Gateways program is critical to paddlers in the Chesapeake region.
We urge you to pass the *Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network Reauthorization Act of 2017* and to fully fund the Gateways program in FY 2018 so that communities across the Chesapeake Bay region can continue to create and enhance outdoor recreation opportunities and to connect all people with the Chesapeake Bay.

Sincerely,

Brett Mayer  
Public Policy Chief  
ACA|Canoe-Kayak-SUP-Raft-Rescue

CC: The Honorable Larry Hogan, Governor of Maryland  
CC: Joel Dunn, President and CEO, Chesapeake Conservancy