TESTIMONY OF SENATOR MIKULSKI
"An Examination of the Impacts of Global Warming on the Chesapeake Bay"
September 26, 2007

(as prepared for delivery)

Thank you Chairwoman Boxer, for holding this hearing today on the impact of global warming on the Chesapeake Bay. Thank you also to the members of the EPW Committee, including Senator Ben Cardin, my great partner in the Senate and a champion for the Bay, and Senator John Warner, who I've worked with for many years on the Bay and other issues important to Maryland and Virginia.

"I'm excited to be here today because global warming is not just about polar bears – it's about the future of the planet itself. It is an inconvenient truth. We need to look at this problem locally to see the real consequences.

"The coastal senators are already seeing and feeling this problem. Our sea levels are rising, our wetlands are disappearing and our islands are underwater. We're looking at the possibility that our agriculture will be wiped out and there won't be a Baltimore Harbor.

"In Maryland, the Bay is our economy, our culture, our soul. Being a waterman is not just a job; it's a way of life. At the same time, we know that Maryland has a turbo economy and we need wise practices to balance the demands on our environment and our economy.

"It is my proud job, as the Chairwoman of the Commerce Justice Science (CJS) Appropriations Subcommittee, to fund 85 percent of climate change science. And I am happy to work with you, the authorizers, to make sure we have sound science that is ungagged, unbought and unbossed – to let science speak for itself.

"We are here today to discuss how we should fix this problem. I sat down with my Environmental Advisory Board and asked them, 'What is the real impact of global warming on the Bay? What have we done to fix it? What more can we do?' They gave me valuable information and I greatly appreciate all their help. Based on their feedback, we decided to hold this hearing to open a dialogue between government officials, scientists and local Bay residents so we can discuss problems currently facing the Bay and what our next steps should be.

"Through three presidents, I've been fighting to restore the health of the Bay. Every year, I fight for $20 million for the Chesapeake Bay Program, bringing together federal, state and local government, and community groups to create solutions for Bay clean up to restore water quality, habitats and fisheries. I've been helping scientists and researchers find the best ways to restore oysters and crabs in the Bay, fighting for almost $13 million for oyster reseeding since 2001 and more than $20 million to build new oyster reefs since 1995. This is important because oysters help filter pollutants out of the Bay and restoring oysters also helps maintain jobs and opportunities for our waterman. Crabs are also a vital part of the Bay's ecosystem and support jobs in a struggling region of my state, so I've been helping scientists find new methods of breeding and releasing crabs, providing nearly $12 million since 2001.

"Our local communities who can't afford to improve water quality also need help. That's why I've been fighting for increased funding for water and sewer infrastructure for Maryland, which received more than $21 million in 2006.

"I am Chairwoman of the Commerce Justice and Science (CJS) Appropriations Subcommittee. My CJS bill informs policymakers' decisions on what to do about global warming. In fact, 85 percent of climate change science is funded in CJS, with almost $1.6 billion per year. Without the science that is funded in the CJS bill, policymakers on the Environment and Public Works Committee would not have the important benefit of this sound science to base regulatory and policy decisions.

"The CJS bill funds NASA's [National Aeronautics and Space Administration] earth science programs at $1.1 billion. This supports the important research missions that study chemicals and aerosols in the atmosphere, the earth's energy budget and links between oceans and climate. NOAA's [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration] weather and satellite programs, which provide short and long term observations and predictions of our weather and climate, are funded at $300 million per year. NSF's [National Science Foundation] research is funded at $200 million per year, and supports competitive, peer-reviewed, basic 'ground truth' research by university scientists.

"I stand ready to work with the authorizers and I am happy you're having this hearing today. There may be international agreements and national bills, but this is ultimately a local issue. That is why it's so important to hear from the state and local officials. I am proud to introduce Governor Martin O'Malley, who has been a great partner with me in saving the Bay. Governor O'Malley is a true innovator, taking what he did when he was mayor of Baltimore – City Stat, a program he pioneered to make government more efficient – and creating Bay Stat, which establishes a process of accountability for measuring and evaluating efforts to restore the Bay. He also created the Maryland Commission on Climate Change, which will perform an assessment of climate change impacts, calculate Maryland's carbon footprint and develop a strategy to reduce greenhouse gases. Governor O'Malley is a leader not just in our state of Maryland, but in this country. He will tell the Committee about his efforts to save the Bay and how we can all work together.

"I thank the Chairwoman for this opportunity to open this hearing and introduce Governor O'Malley. I look forward to hearing all of the testimony from the distinguished panelists and coming up with real solutions to these problems. We need to make an action plan on how to make the Bay healthier and how state and federal officials can work together with our partners in the community. The Chesapeake Bay is a national treasure and Maryland's greatest natural resource, but the Bay is in trouble and we need to do everything we can to save it. I will always fight to protect the Bay and the jobs and livelihoods that depend on it. Thank you again for this opportunity, now I turn the microphone over to the Governor of Maryland."

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