

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

February 27, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke  
Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dr. Walter Cruickshank  
Acting Director, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke and Dr. Cruickshank:

We write in strong opposition to the Department of the Interior's National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program for 2019-2024, announced on January 4, 2018. The draft proposal would allow lease sales for offshore oil and gas drilling for over ninety-percent of the Outer Continental Shelf, including the Mid-Atlantic region. We request that Maryland be exempted from any new oil and gas leases as the Department takes steps to finalize the Plan.

Maryland's inclusion in the draft proposal is heavily opposed in our state, as it threatens the livelihood of countless businesses and communities with significant interests in our fisheries and tourism industries. Furthermore, oil and gas development in the Mid-Atlantic region is opposed by our military, as they have found it threatens military readiness maneuvers and could interfere with missile tests the Navy relies on to protect our coasts. The NASA Wallops Flight Facility located on the Eastern Shore, which supports a burgeoning commercial space industry in our region, has expressed similar concerns that oil and gas development in these waters could undermine aerospace test activities, resupply missions to the International Space Station, and other future commercial space flight activities.

Should oil and gas development be permitted in these waters, a potential oil spill could do untold harm to our fisheries, tourism industry, and environment. Indeed, confidence in the Department's ability to assure our constituents that oil and gas development in these waters can be done safely and responsibly was drastically undermined when you rolled back reasoned safeguards put in place following the Deepwater Horizon spill in April 2010, which cost the lives of eleven workers and did lasting damage to the fisheries and ecosystems of the Gulf Coast.

As you know, commercial oil and gas development in the Mid-Atlantic region has been proposed and defeated previously for many of the same reasons outlined above. We believe that when you have had a chance to consider the consequences of this proposal on our military, the State's economy, and the environment, you will reach a similar conclusion.

For all of these reasons, we urge you to consider the voices of our constituents and their elected representatives and remove Maryland from the five year Plan.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

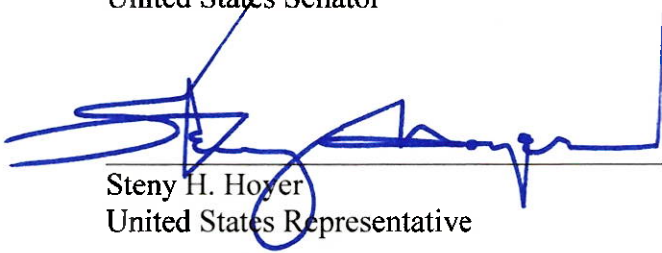
Sincerely,



Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Steny H. Hoyer  
United States Representative



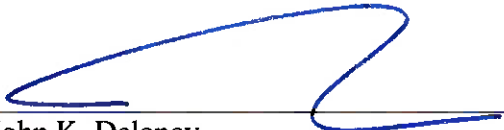
Elijah E. Cummings  
United States Representative



C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger  
United States Representative



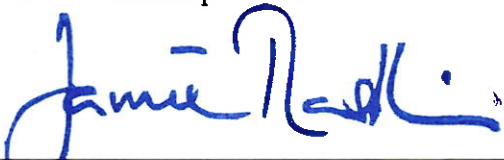
John Sarbanes  
United States Representative



John K. Delaney  
United States Representative



Anthony G. Brown  
United States Representative



Jamie Raskin  
United States Representative