

## **Commencement 2021**

### **University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science**

#### **The Honorable Benjamin L. Cardin, U.S. Senator from Maryland**

##### **Keynote Remarks**

I would like to congratulate all of 2021 graduates from the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science. What a ceremony! During a global pandemic, you have worked hard and overcome so many COVID-19 challenges to reach this day. At least with a virtual commencement speaker, it permits you to multi-task during my remarks.

Your university is a special place and I am honored to participate in your graduation. UMCES is the lead research institution in Maryland focused on understanding the Chesapeake Bay watershed, from its highlands to its coastal shores. You are at the forefront of just about every environmental challenge from the Chesapeake Bay to the Arctic; from algae to forests; from corals to birds, and from genes to ecosystems.

Over the last few years, you have had a unique opportunity to learn from some of the finest minds and most experienced researchers anywhere in the country. UMCES provides rare, hands-on experience and plays a unique role in both our educational, and natural landscape.

So, my thanks go out to President Peter Goodwin, Chancellor Jay Perman, Regent Barry Gossett, the faculty, staff and all those who work to keep UMCES at the top of its game and rising higher and higher. UMCES is a key partner in Team Maryland and advancing the priorities of our state that are based on science.

To the graduates, it speaks volumes about each of you that you chose to advance your educational pursuits in such a special institution. I am proud of your work for the Bay and its inhabitants, and proud of your commitment to training the next generation of environmental researchers and leaders. I applaud all of your efforts, because much work remains to be done. While the long-term health of our Bay and its tributaries are steadily improved, as indicated in tools like the UMCES Chesapeake Bay Report Cards, we've still got a long way to go.

The Chesapeake Bay is a presidentially declared National Treasure. Your work is helping us to protect that treasure and keep it for generations to come. That's why I'm honored to champion the Chesapeake Bay Program, which has transformed the Bay into one of the most studied locations in the world and that serves as a global model for cooperative restoration.

We are at a consequential time in history for our region, in terms of climate change impacts from rising sea levels and temperatures ... shifting migratory patterns for wildlife ... extreme rain events ... and the list goes on and on. The scientific consensus tells us that we must act now. We cannot back out of our commitment to future generations and this planet Earth. We only get one chance. It is time we recommit ourselves in our efforts to restore ecosystems and advance environmental justice.

President Biden's recent actions in regards to the Paris Climate Agreement and strengthening America's commitment to the global climate agenda underscores our national priority. Scientific study helps ensure that the investments we make will go the furthest toward achieving those goals. This means improved human health, increased water security, and enhanced environmental resilience.

Right here in Maryland, we are fortunate to have made great strides in so many projects involving the Chesapeake Bay, including the reconstruction of Poplar Island, the assessment and cultivation of the iconic Eastern Oyster at Horn Point Laboratory, and the restoration of numerous urban waterfronts.

Poplar Island and Horn Point represent job growth in our region in a cleaner environment. These ground-breaking initiatives give me hope for what else we can accomplish to protect our watershed – and our planet. In order to meet the challenge, we must quickly fill gaps in expertise at federal agencies that produce climate projections and health policies.

That's where you come in. Take a look at those around you. You are the future. You are our experts. Thank you, UMCES! I know that we are in good hands with this new round of distinguished graduates and professionals. I am confident that each of you will build on the education you have worked towards today, serve in your community, care for your fellow citizens, and work to hold open the doors of opportunity for all those that come after you.

Congratulations on your achievements. I am so proud to represent you in the United States Senate.