April 5, 2010

The Hon. Martin O’Malley  The Hon. Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr.
Office of the Governor  President, Senate of Maryland
100 State Circle  State House, H-107
Annapolis, MD 21401  Annapolis, MD 21401
Fax No. (410) 974-5252  Fax No. (410) 841-3910

Chancellor William E. Kirwan  The Hon. Michael E. Busch
University System of Maryland  Speaker, Maryland House of Delegates
3300 Metzerott Road  State House, H-101
Adelphi, MD 20783  Annapolis, MD 21401
Fax No. (301) 445-1981  Fax No. (410) 841-3880

Re: Proposed Legislation to Restrict Funding for University of Maryland School of Law Clinical Education Programs

Dear Governor O’Malley, President Miller, Speaker Busch, and Chancellor Kirwan,

I am writing on behalf of the Natural Resources Defense Council to support continued academic independence and the important legal services provided by the University of Maryland School of Law’s legal clinical programs. NRDC is a public health and environmental advocacy organization with more than 12,000 members in the State of Maryland.

The Maryland legislature is considering two proposals to withhold funds from the University of Maryland School of Law unless the law school reports on clients served by its clinical programs, discloses expenditures and funding sources for its cases, and publishes the criteria used to approve client representation. These proposed funding limits are intended to retaliate for the clinics’ representation of clients that are unpopular with certain economic interests in the state.

The University of Maryland law school clinics serve a crucial function by providing legal services to the disadvantaged and educational opportunities for law students. The two budget proposals would inappropriately intimidate and pressure these clinics, the student practitioners who staff them, and the clients they serve. The proposed funding restrictions should therefore be rejected.

Respectfully,

Aaron Colangelo