The Honorable Terence R. McAuliffe
Governor of Virginia
Office of the Governor
Patrick Henry Building, 3rd Floor
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Governor McAuliffe:

The Virginia Offshore Wind Development Authority (VOWDA) respectfully requests your support of the Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy’s (DMME) request to carry forward $310,000 in FY 14 general funds to conduct offshore wind energy research projects in FY 15.

Earlier this year, a Request for Proposal (RFP) for $860,000 was issued by DMME and four projects were awarded in the spring of 2014 to conduct offshore wind research projects. One of those projects awarded $310,000 in General Funds to Dominion Virginia Power for deep ocean geotechnical borings in the vicinity of the Wind Energy Area on the Outer Continental Shelf, about 26 miles off the coast of Virginia Beach. The project was dependent on the use of a “vessel of opportunity” that was hired by Dominion with other funds. Because required approvals from the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) could not be received to support the vessel’s availability and weather delays greatly increased the risk of incurring very high daily standby vessel charges, the work could not be completed by June 30, 2014.

There is ample need to conduct additional data collection activities. Funds could be used to support a similar project to further the environmental work of the Virginia Offshore Wind Technology Advancement Project (VOWTAP) and the development of the commercial lease. There are other demands for resources needed to accommodate obligations associated with the Commonwealth’s two pending ocean research leases with BOEM. These leases and VOWTAP are long-term strategic commitments that are integral to the Commonwealth’s economic development goals for offshore wind to accelerate private commercial development and make Virginia the primary hub for the Mid-Atlantic wind industry and its associated supply chain.
Additional research proposals received in a 2014 RFP could not be funded in FY14 but still are needed. One is an assessment of the offshore wind industry’s needs and an analysis of Virginia port and logistical assets to identify gaps that can be filled to establish Virginia as the ideal manufacturing, operational and supply chain hub for offshore wind development in the Mid-Atlantic region. Conducting this port gap analysis is a recommendation in the 2014 Virginia Energy Plan.

We believe that these funds are critical to enable the Commonwealth to preserve our previous investments and to continue the momentum for Virginia to become the home to a vibrant Mid-Atlantic offshore wind industry and supply chain.

VOWDA appreciates your support for new business and renewable resources in Virginia and encourages you to support this carry forward request. The Commonwealth continues to be in a unique position to attract offshore wind development. This request is critical to ensuring Virginia does not lose that advantage. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Robert Matthias
Chairman