Dear Representative/Senator **[your rep’s name],**

Since the 1940s, we have been dumping road salt on our streets, sidewalks and parking lots every winter to melt ice and create safer traveling conditions. Road salt is effective when used correctly and sparingly, but we have fallen into a pattern of over-applying and misusing road salt in ways that have detrimental effects on wildlife, human health and the environment. I am asking that you work towards salt reduction inVirginia.

Road salt inevitably ends up entering our streams, rivers and lakes through runoff and storm drains. Once road salt enters bodies of water, it is extremely difficult and expensive to remove. Road salt threatens our water quality in multiple ways by contaminating drinking water, corroding pipes and leaching metals into our water. High levels of chloride are a danger to human health, especially for residents with pre-existing conditions such as high blood pressure. Chloride is toxic to aquatic life and can degrade vegetation and soil. It cannot be naturally broken down, so it permanently stays in the environment. In addition to the environmental and health consequences, our salt use currently costs the US $16-19 billion in damages to infrastructure like roads and bridges.

Virginia has already started to work on this issue with DEQ’s Northern Virginia Salt Management Strategy (SaMS). But this is only a first step. I urge you to not only fund the research and initiatives recommended by SaMS, but to consider expanding the successful initiatives from SaMS to the rest of the state. One recommendation of SaMS that I support is the certification and training of public and private salt applicators in smarter salt use. Programs like this have been extremely successful at reducing salt and saving money in states like New Hampshire and Minnesota. Please support a training and certification program here in our state.

One more thing that could make a big difference in salt use in Virginia is regulating the packages that deicers come in for private consumers. Unbelievably, there is no requirement to be truthful on the packaging that rock salt and deicers come in. Packages can have labels like “eco-friendly,” “pet-friendly” or, most shockingly, “salt-free” when they are chloride-based products which are just as detrimental to gardens, pets and freshwater resources. People who have heard that rock salt is bad can be easily misled into buying products that are equally harmful to the environment. Please consider regulating how salt and deicers are labeled in Virginia.

Maintaining the safety of transportation conditions for our residents is a requirement, but our current methods are deteriorating our environment. By supporting smart salting training and certification and regulating deicer labeling, you will be protecting water quality from the harms of road salt for generations to come.

Sincerely,

**[Signature]**

**[Your name]**