

Chair, Senate Environmental Conservation Committee  
New York State Senate  
State Capitol  
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Senator May and Esteemed Committee Members,

On behalf of Community Science Institute (CSI), I respectfully submit this written testimony for the upcoming public hearing on May 21, 2025, to evaluate the efficacy of New York State's monitoring and management of harmful algal blooms (HABs).

CSI is a 501c3 nonprofit and New York State Department of Health-Environmental Laboratory Approval Program (NYSDOH-ELAP ID# 11790) laboratory. Since our founding in 2000, CSI has worked to inspire and empower communities to safeguard water resources by cultivating scientific literacy through volunteer water quality monitoring, certified laboratory analyses, and education.

Since 2018, CSI has led the Cayuga Lake Harmful Algal Bloom Monitoring Program in partnership with the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network, Discover Cayuga Lake, Tompkins County Whole Health, Seneca County Health Department, Cayuga County Health Department, and local volunteers. This program collects actionable data on cyanobacterial blooms, protects public health, and disseminates timely bloom information and test results.

During the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC)'s official HABs monitoring season, approximately 100 trained CSI volunteers patrol designated shoreline zones on Cayuga Lake at least weekly. When a HAB is observed, volunteers report it to CSI and collect samples for analysis. CSI's lab determines cyanobacterial composition, chlorophyll *a* concentration, and microcystin toxin levels. Reports and results are published on our public HABs database and submitted to the NYHABs system and local health departments within hours. The Cayuga Lake HABs Monitoring Program provides a valuable educational opportunity to the volunteers who participate and allows them to become ambassadors of HABs knowledge in their communities. Our partners at the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network further this effort during the monitoring season through their weekly HABs newsletter which reaches over 1,800 subscribers.