



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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February 18, 2022

Delegate Kumar Barve, Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee
House Office Building, Room 251
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony **IN SUPPORT** of HB 706: Maryland Department of Emergency Management – Office of Resilience

Dear Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein and Members of the Committee,

While the impacts of our changing climate can be felt across the nation and around the world, as a coastal state, Maryland is especially vulnerable to the effects of this global phenomena. In their state climate summary for Maryland, NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information stated that both precipitation and the frequency of intense rainfall events is projected to increase, leading to an enhanced risk for flooding. Large additional increases in sea level rise are also projected with potentially significant environmental and economic impacts, according to NOAA.

In my first year as County Executive, I signed the Howard County Comprehensive Emergency Response and Recovery Plan, which incorporated lessons learned from the 2016 and 2018 "one-in-1,000-year" floods that impacted Historic Ellicott City. I remain committed to keeping Howard County prepared to respond to natural disasters and unforeseen challenges. Our Ellicott City Safe and Sound plan will make our town safer and more resilient for future generations as we continue to implement robust emergency response and recovery policies.

In the absence of a more coordinated strategy, local jurisdictions across the state are currently tackling these issues individually, sometimes with limited resources and expertise. The breadth of the problem requires a cohesive, statewide plan that provides local government with necessary assistance and invites collaboration between state and local governments.

I want to commend Delegate Sample-Hughes and Delegate Watson for introducing this legislation which would create an Office of Resilience within the newly established Maryland Department of Emergency Management *and* establish a position to oversee its efforts. The Chief Resilience Officer would coordinate efforts of state and local agencies identified in the Maryland Hazard Mitigation Plan.

This important position would also be responsible for identifying and securing federal and state funding that will assist our local jurisdictions with implementing resiliency projects that keep our communities safe and environmentally sustainable.

House Bill 706 will provide a valuable state-level, coordinating response and best practices that will help us respond to emergencies and keep our residents and businesses secure.

For these and many other reasons, I urge a favorable report on House Bill 760.

Sincerely,

Howard County Executive