



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

Senate Bill 721

Emergency Management - Chief Resilience Officer - Appointment and Duties

CBF POSITION: **SUPPORT**

To: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

DATE: February 19, 2020

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation SUPPORTS SB 721 as elevating the need for coordinated resilience planning efforts throughout Maryland. This bill establishes the position of Chief Resilience Officer within the Maryland Emergency Management Agency to coordinate State and local efforts to build resilience to risks identified in the Maryland Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Climate change and sea level rise pose resiliency challenges to Maryland. Rising sea levels threaten to inundate miles of Chesapeake shoreline. For the Chesapeake Bay, warmer waters exacerbate the Bay's dead zones, stressing fish and other forms of marine life critical to the Bay's restoration.

In low-lying areas throughout Maryland, storm surges combined with higher sea levels and increasingly erratic storm activity may create a "perfect storm" that will flood thousands of acres. Many of those areas are economically disadvantaged, and the combination of flooding and limited access to emergency facilities—facilities that might themselves be flooded—could be disastrous.

The EPA predicts that a three-degree overall air temperature increase could increase the heat-related human death toll. For example, in Baltimore City, the EPA predicts that a three-degree overall air temperature increase could increase the heat-related death toll by 50 percent, from 85 to 130 people annually.

This bill rightfully elevates the importance of resiliency through establishing responsibility for statewide coordination of resiliency efforts for risks identified in the Maryland Hazard Mitigation Plan. The Chief Resiliency Officer's success in identifying and securing federal, State, and local funding streams will be critical to Maryland's ability to confront the hazards associated with climate change.

For these reasons, CBF urges a FAVORABLE report on SB 721. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Robin Clark Eilenberg, Staff Attorney at 443.482.2165 or reilenberg@cbf.org.

Maryland Office • Philip Merrill Environmental Center • 6 Herndon Avenue • Annapolis • Maryland • 21403
Phone (410) 268-8816 • Fax (410) 280-3513

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 300,000 members and e-subscribers, including over 107,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.