



February 18, 2020

House Bill 539

Local Governments - Resilience Authorities - Authorization

Environment and Transportation Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

With more than 530 miles of tidal shoreline, and many low-lying communities, Anne Arundel County is on the front lines of climate resilience. Our county experiences nuisance flooding, storm surges, frequent heavy rain events, and other consequences from changing weather patterns and sea level rise. In our battle against climate change, collaboration is key and partnerships are essential. No county or municipality can tackle these challenges alone in a vacuum. We will need to work together and with private and public partners to protect our infrastructure and programs that serve our residents and businesses.

HB 539 will help us achieve those goals. This enabling legislation will give local governments the ability to establish resilience authorities that will help attract public funding and private capital to dedicate to much-needed capital projects.

Over the past several months, Anne Arundel County has been working collaboratively with the University of Maryland Center for Global Sustainability, Charles County, Queen Anne's County, and the City of Annapolis to host resilience workshops and identify unique, valuable assets within each jurisdiction. Our county workgroup identified specific weaknesses and vulnerabilities that could impact county assets, such as sea level rise and extreme weather events. Climate resilience is generally defined as the ability to prepare for, recover from, and adapt to climate change impacts. From this work, we have developed a draft climate resilience action strategy.

With the passage of HB 539, Anne Arundel County intends to utilize this authority by partnering with the City of Annapolis. As we work to implement our climate action strategy, our first priority will be to work with the City to revitalize the Annapolis City Dock area and prepare it for sea level rise in accordance with the City Dock Action Committee's consensus recommendations. A resilience authority is essential to this effort, because it will allow us to bring in financing mechanisms and private capital otherwise unavailable.

Preparing for the impacts of climate change may be the defining issue of our generation. HB 539 will give local governments an important tool in that effort.

I urge a FAVORABLE report on HB 539.



Steuart Pittman
County Executive