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Education, Health, and
Environmental Affairs Committee

Chair, Joint Committee on
Cybersecurity, Information Technology
and Biotechnology



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of SB721 - Emergency Management - Chief Resilience Officer -
Appointment and Duties**

March 17th, 2020

Chair Pendergrass, Vice-Chair Pena-Melnyk, and Members of the Health and Government
Operations Committee:

Thank you for your consideration of SB721. Over the past year, I have had the honor of serving as the Senator representing District 9, which includes Ellicott City. Like many communities in your own district, Ellicott City has been grappling with the issues of climate change and catastrophic flooding - not as some far off and hypothetical danger, but as an all too real aspect of everyday life. The experience of my constituents, living through two “thousand-year floods” over the course of two years, is of a magnitude that I hope is not indicative of the direction of our vulnerable communities. But as a coastal state with a great deal of inland tributaries, we as policy makers should be concerned about the implications of climate change and sea level rise on the projected increase in frequency and severity of flooding, and other environmental emergencies threatening Marylanders.

Today, 81,000 Marylanders are at risk of coastal flooding, with 38,000 more individuals projected to also be at risk by 2050. In the same time frame, our state is projected to face up to \$19 billion worth of damage due to sea level rise and flooding. We are capable of preparing for and managing a threat of this magnitude, but doing so will require a great deal of thoughtfulness, coordination, and accountability.

This bill will create the position of the Chief Resilience Officer (CRO) within the Maryland
Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), responsible for:

- coordinating state and local agencies engaged in building resilience to risks related to climate change, as identified in the Maryland Hazard Mitigation Plan;
- leveraging funding streams and technical resources at the Federal, State, and Local levels to support Maryland resilience efforts;
- working with the Adaptation and Resiliency Workgroup of the Maryland Commission on Climate Change to coordinate resilience strategy across state agencies, and update the resilience strategy for the State;
- working with the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES) to establish baseline indicators, goals, and metrics to guide resilience efforts, and to produce an economic analysis of the state's resilience efforts;
- working with the Department of the Environment to review the State's Flood Insurance Rate Maps;
- and engaging with stakeholders in industries impacted by climate change.

This bill also includes a requirement for the CRO to produce a report that would include an overview of the CRO's yearly activities, as well as recommendations for the possible establishment of a resilience program in the Governor's office of Homeland Security. These measures are intended to bring transparency to the CRO's role, as well as to guide the State's long term resilience strategy.

This committee has considered many bills dealing with climate resilience this session. I am proud to say that we are among those states leading the nation in resilience efforts, in no small part due to the hard work that all of you and other members of the General Assembly have done. This bill compounds on those efforts.

The more capacity we have to coordinate these efforts, the more efficient Maryland's resilience system will be as a whole. Having an individual who is responsible for and dedicated to the coordination of these complex and ambitious goals will allow Maryland to make sure every dollar and minute we spend on resilience goes as far as possible to benefit each and every one of our communities. **For that reason, I respectfully request a favorable report from this committee.**

Sincerely,



Senator Katie Fry Hester
Howard and Carroll Counties

Adaptation and Resiliency Workgroup of the Maryland commission on Climate Change:

- Support the CRO with coordinating efforts across state agencies.
- Assist the CRO in producing an updated adaptation and resilience strategy.
- Review and alter the membership of the Workgroup at the request of the CRO

The University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science:

- Assist the CRO in establishing baseline goals and indicators for the Resilience efforts of the state.
- Assist the CRO in producing an economic analysis and policy benchmark report on the State's resilience efforts.
- Assist the CRO in identifying potential State, Federal, and private sources of necessary resilience resources.

Maryland Department of the Environment:

- Assist the Chief Resilience Officer in reviewing and developing recommendations for Maryland's Flood Insurance Rate Maps.

Chief Resilience Officer:

- Oversee the development of a State Resilience Strategy
- Coordinate efforts across State and Local agencies
- Identify and securing funding streams and technical assistance across all levels of government.
- Work with business leaders from industries vulnerable to risks identified in the Maryland Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Outcomes:

- Increased coordination of Federal, State, Local, and private resilience efforts.
- Identification and securing of Federal, State, and Local funding streams.
- Creation of a State Resilience Strategy tied to the Maryland Hazard Mitigation Strategy.
- Systematic review of the State's Flood Insurance Rate Maps.
- Establishment of resilience baselines and metrics to monitor resilience efforts.
- An economic analysis of the resilience efforts of the state.
- A report on the activities of the CRO and recommendations regarding the possible creation of a Resiliency program in the Governor's Office of Homeland Security.