



Testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 1209 – Climate Ready Floodplain Act of 2023

March 6, 2023

Dear Chairman Barve and Member of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT** of **HB1209** on behalf of ShoreRivers' 2,000 members. ShoreRivers is a river protection group on the Eastern Shore working to protect and restore local waterways using science-based advocacy, outreach, and restoration.

HB1209 will direct the Maryland Department of Environment (MDE) to consult with expert stakeholders in the review and update of the model floodplain ordinance every five years with special consideration put toward future impacts resulting from combined effects of sea level rise, storm surge, increased precipitation, increased temperature, overflow from waters of the state, and extreme weather events related to climate change. HB1209 will also direct MDE to educate communities about flood risk and provide local governments with assistance when adopting new flood plain ordinances.

Sea level rise, coastal storm surge, and intensified precipitation—all of which are central concerns on the Eastern Shore—have rendered local floodplain ordinances inadequate in planning and protecting against the flood hazards of today and tomorrow. **The Georgetown Climate Center's 2019 report "[HIGHER STANDARDS: Opportunities for Enhancing Flood Resilience in the Eastern Shore of Maryland](#)," strongly recommends changes in land-use policies and regulations, specifically the expansion of the floodplain, to address increasing flood risks from sea level rise.** Common on the Eastern Shore are poultry farms (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations, or CAFOs), septic systems, and new development, which becomes sources of pollution in flood-prone areas. When development, infrastructure, and even fill material are placed in the floodplain without proper citing and design criteria, the ability of the floodplain to manage flood waters, protect water quality, and provide natural habitats is impaired.

Its vast costal landscape combined with land subsidence makes the Eastern Shore region extremely susceptible to impacts of sea level rise such as flooding, erosion, and deterioration of infrastructure. According to a 2020 [NOAA technical report](#), **Cambridge, Maryland experienced 5-8 high-tide flood days that year, whereas, NOAA scientists predict that in 2050 Cambridge will experience 40-150 days of high-tide flooding.** And as high tide flooding retreats it transports with it nutrient and sediment pollution from lawns, urban landscapes and even farm land. An analysis by a [biological oceanographer from Old Dominion University](#) of water samples collected in Norfolk, Virginia during a *King Tide* event showed that **"one morning of tidal flooding along the Lafayette River in Norfolk poured nearly the entire annual U.S. Environmental Protection Agency allocation of nitrogen runoff for the river — 1,941 pounds — into Chesapeake Bay."**

ShoreRivers supports this bill to update climate-focused floodplain ordinances that will increase protection of local rivers from pollution stemming from land and infrastructure inundated by sea level rise. We urge the committee to adopt a favorable report on HB1209.

Sincerely,

Matt Pluta, Choptank Riverkeeper on behalf of **ShoreRivers**

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