



HB1209 - Environment – Flood Control – Flood Risk Assessment and Model Ordinance (Climate Ready Floodplain Act of 2023)

Testimony before the Environment and Transportation Committee

March 8, 2023

Position: FAVORABLE

Mr. Chair, Mr. Vice Chair, and members of the committee, my name is Barbara Matheson, and I represent the 750+ members of Indivisible Howard County. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony in support of HB1209. We are grateful to Delegates Lehman, Ivey, Pena-Melnyk, Ruth, Solomon, Stewart, Taveras, Terrasa for their sponsorship of this important and essential act.

Atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases are triggering a complex set of changes on Earth. Warmer oceans and warmer air are producing more water vapor. In Maryland the direct result is more severe storms and more intense rainfall. More of our rain is now falling as downpours, which increases inland flooding. The catastrophic floods in Ellicott City in 2016 and 2018 illustrate the severity of inland flooding. **Researchers at the University of Maryland Extension predict that inland flooding will increase by about 50% by 2050.**

The number of strong and damaging hurricanes is increasing. In 2017, just three hurricanes (Harvey, Irma, and Maria) caused over \$295 billion in damage. The 2020 hurricane season broke records with 30 named storms, 12 of which made landfall. 2021 was the fourth-costliest hurricane season on record, with 21 named storms, including 7 that made landfall. More of these storms are moving up the Eastern seaboard threatening Maryland's coastline.

HB1209 is an essential and expedient plan to protect properties from inevitable damage and destruction. It mandates that the Department of the Environment do the following: produce a Flood Risk Assessment Map and educate the citizens as to content; establish criteria and regulations for both new and renovated structures in floodplain areas; develop regulations to prohibit landfills in floodplain areas, and designate areas where construction is prohibited. Local planning and zoning departments of local governments will be required to submit to DOE evidence of compliance. These measures shall be enacted by September 1, 2025 – an expedient and necessary deadline.

We respectfully urge a favorable committee report.

Barbara Matheson, PhD

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