



## **Testimony in Support of House Bill 78: Bay Restoration Fund - Authorized Uses House Environment & Transportation Committee | January 29, 2020**

### **Steven Hershkowitz, CCAN Action Fund Maryland Director**

The Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN) Action Fund supports House Bill 78, which includes climate resiliency and flood control as priorities for funding through the Bay Restoration Fund. We thank Del. Courtney Watson for sponsoring this legislation to help prepare our communities for the increased dangers of flooding due to the climate crisis.

CCAN Action Fund and our grassroots network throughout Maryland is dedicated to achieving a net zero greenhouse gas emission economy by 2045, as is recommended by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). To create this future, we must invest in frontline and historically disadvantaged communities, protect workers, create good-paying union jobs, and result in greater wealth and income equality.

While CCAN Action Fund prioritizes policies and investment to mitigate climate change, we know it is impossible for the state to ignore adapting to potentially devastating climate impacts that are already impacting the lives of Marylanders. The 2020s will not just be the Climate Decade because we have 10 years left to cut our emissions by 60%. This will also be the decade when we more visibly recognize the way climate change impacts our everyday quality of life. In Maryland, flooding will be a large part of that realization.

With 3,100 miles of tidal shoreline along the Atlantic Ocean and Chesapeake Bay, Maryland is extremely at risk of flooding from rising sea levels. According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, Maryland has the second most communities at risk of coastal flooding in the nation, behind only Louisiana. Their analysis identifies 22 Maryland communities that will experience chronic flooding by 2035.<sup>1</sup>

Ocean City has a 93% risk of seeing a flood above five feet between now and 2050. There are 11,478 homes in Ocean City below five feet. Baltimore City has an 80% risk of seeing a flood above five feet between now and 2050. There's more than \$1.3 billion worth of property below five feet in Baltimore City. Other notable municipalities in the state, like Annapolis, Berlin, California, Cambridge, and Havre de Grace also face significant risk of large flooding events in the next thirty years.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [Union of Concerned Scientists. "Maryland Faces Chronic Inundation."](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Climate Central. "Surging Seas Risk Finder."](#)

According to the Maryland Department of Environment, coastal storms cause roughly \$200 million in damages every year. By 2030, those costs could grow \$7-30 million annually, \$20-160 million annually by 2050, and \$340 million in additional annual damages by 2100.<sup>3</sup>

Of course, after two “thousand-year” floods within 22 months, Marylanders in Ellicott City are painfully aware of more frequent inland flooding due to intense rainfall. Global warming will only continue to increase air temperature, creating more moisture to intensify storms. According to the National Climate Assessment, “The recent dominant trend in precipitation throughout the Northeast has been towards increases in rainfall intensity, with recent increases in intensity exceeding those in other regions in the contiguous United States. Further increases in rainfall intensity are expected, with increases in precipitation expected during the winter and spring.”<sup>4</sup>

HB 87 takes these growing risks into account by making climate resiliency and flooding a priority for funding from the Bay Restoration Fund. It also adds “volume or quality control” to the kind of grants that can be given to local government. Counties often take on tremendous financial cost to respond to flooding events. For example, Howard County spent more than \$12 million to responding to the 2018 Ellicott City flood. They should have the ability to request funding from the state to make infrastructure upgrades that mitigate flood risk and damage.

As noted in the fiscal note, the legislation would not impact the finances for the Bay Restoration Fund Wastewater Account and can be implemented with existing resources.

CCAN Action Fund urges the Committee to give HB 87 a favorable report.

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<sup>3</sup> [Maryland Department of Environment. “Summary of American Climate Prospectus Data Describing Climate Impacts for Maryland.”](#)

<sup>4</sup> [U.S. Global Change Research Program. “Fourth National Climate Assessment.”](#)