

Tuesday February 18, 2020

TO: Kumar Barve, Chair of House Environment and Transportation Committee and Committee Members
FROM: Joshua Kurtz, The Nature Conservancy, Policy and Government Relations Director
POSITION: Support HB 539 Local Governments – Resilience Authorities – Authorization

The Nature Conservancy (the Conservancy) strongly supports HB 539 offered by Delegate Watson and Delegate Lierman. HB 539 enables counties and municipalities to develop Resilience Authorities. These authorities would establish funding streams to implement projects aimed at building resilience in communities.

This approach allows local governments to prioritize interventions toward their most pressing impacts from climate change based on local geographic, economic and social factors and to develop projects that minimize and mitigate those issues. Across Maryland, local governments are experiencing the impacts of higher sea levels, increased erosion, higher temperatures and changing patterns of precipitation. Enabling the creation of the Resilience Authorities would provide opportunities to fund critical projects, like the Annapolis City Dock project, intended to build local resilience and reduce risks. These funds could also be leveraged to access new grant opportunities through the Federal Emergency Management Agency's new Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program. This fund has between \$300-500M appropriated annually for grants to capital projects that proactively improve resilience.

The Conservancy commends Delegate Watson and Delegate Lierman for identifying a solution that unlocks resources and improves local governments' flexibility to tackle these challenges. Building proactive solutions will allow the State to save money in the future; according to a recent analysis by National Institute of Building Sciences, every \$1 spent building resilience saves \$6 when disasters strike. Building these funding opportunities is critical to the health and safety of Marylanders.

Therefore, we urge a favorable report on HB 539.