



February 17, 2021

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: House Bill 542 – Emergency Management - Chief Resilience Officer - Appointment and Duties

Dear Chairman Pendergrass and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) has reviewed House Bill 542, entitled Emergency Management - Chief Resilience Officer - Appointment and Duties and would like to offer a letter of information about this legislation.

House Bill 542 requires the Director of the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) to appoint a Chief Resilience Officer to serve at the Director's pleasure. The Chief Resilience Officer will be responsible for coordinating State and local efforts to build resilience to risks identified in the Maryland Hazard Mitigation Plan ("Mitigation Plan"). The Chief Resilience Officer's duties will include (i) overseeing the development of a State resilience strategy, (ii) coordinating across State and local agencies to prepare and implement resilience strategies, (iii) identifying, securing and assisting in accessing Federal, State and local funding and technical assistance to support resilience efforts, and (iv) working with business leaders from industries vulnerable to risks identified in the Mitigation Plan to identify best practices for preparing and responding to those risks. From Calendar Year 2021 through 2025¹, or until there is a substantial change to the risk assessment portion of the Mitigation Plan, the Chief Resilience Officer shall prioritize building resilience to coastal hazards and flooding due to climate change and ensure the collaboration of relevant State agencies and programs in addressing that priority.

Currently, MDE is designated by FEMA as the coordinating agency for the National Flood Insurance Program ("NFIP"). The proposed bill provides that MDE will now assist the Chief Resilience Officer with reviewing the State's Flood Insurance Rate Maps. Giving the Chief Resilience Officer authority over the mapping process conflicts with MDE's role as the coordinating agency for the NFIP. FEMA provides MDE annual funding to maintain updated flood rate insurance maps. This may be affected depending on the level of involvement from the Chief Resilience Officer and MEMA.

In addition, the Chief Resilience Officer's duties would overlap with MDE's statutory authority as Chair of the Maryland Climate Change Commission to appoint workgroup members. The bill as stated is not clear whether the Chief Resilience Officer would be given authority over the efforts of other State Agencies regarding Climate Change resilience projects or if the responsibility is

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transferred to their office. The lack of clarity may cause operational confusion and inefficiency rather than coordination of efforts.

Thank you for your consideration. We will continue to monitor House Bill 542 during the Committee's deliberations, and I am available to answer any questions you may have. Please feel free to contact me at 410-260-6301 or by e-mail at tyler.abbott@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler Abbott", written over a horizontal line.

Tyler Abbott

cc: The Honorable Courtney Watson