



**THE SENATE OF MARYLAND**  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of SB822-Public Safety - Maryland Emergency Management Agency  
- Office of Resilience**

March 4th, 2021

Chair Pinsky, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Members of the Health and Government Operations  
Committee:

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 822. Over the past two years, I have had the honor of serving as the Senator representing District 9, which includes Ellicott City. Like many communities in your own district, Ellicott City has been grappling with the issues of climate change and catastrophic flooding - not as some far off and hypothetical danger, but as an all too real aspect of daily life. The experience of my constituents, living through two “thousand-year floods” over the course of two years, is of a magnitude that I hope is not indicative of the direction of our vulnerable communities. But as a coastal state with a great deal of inland tributaries, we as policy makers should be concerned about the implications of climate change and sea level rise on the projected increase in frequency and severity of flooding, and other environmental emergencies threatening Marylanders.

Today, 81,000 Marylanders are at risk of coastal flooding, with 38,000 more individuals projected to also be at risk by 2050. In the same time frame, our state is projected to face up to \$19 billion worth of damage due to sea level rise and flooding. We are capable of preparing for and managing a threat of this magnitude, but doing so will require a great deal of thoughtfulness, coordination, and accountability.

This bill will create the Office of Resilience within the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), responsible for guiding State resilience initiatives; leveraging Federal and Private funding; and building partnerships across the public and private sectors. This Office would also be responsible for:

- Administering Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) mitigation grant programs and recovery focused programs;
- Coordinating with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to administer the National Flood Insurance Program;

- Administering state mitigation grants;
- And developing flood risk assessment tools for use by statewide programs and projects.

The resilience office model is comparable to successful efforts in other states. In 2018 the North Carolina legislature established the Office of Recovery and Resiliency in the Department of Public Safety (NCORR) following the devastation of Hurricane Florence. NCORR is responsible for administering funds received by the state through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grants for Disaster Recovery Program (CDBG-DR) and coordinates the State Disaster Recovery Task Force. NCORR partners with local government, state agencies and community organizations to improve resilience in social and financial systems, infrastructure, ecosystems and natural habitats, and overall health and well-being. Led by North Carolina's Chief Resilience Officer, NCORR has leveraged \$3.4 million in state and federal grant funding for implementation of the N.C. Resilient Communities, awarded \$47.3 million in grants and zero-interest loans to help communities recover after multiple hurricanes and build resiliency, and has awarded \$108 million in federal CDBG-DR funds to homeowners, small businesses and local governments.

By following the successful and effective model of North Carolina's Office of Recovery and Resilience, Maryland's Office of Resilience would improve the capacity and ability of our State to administer resilience funds. The more capacity we have to coordinate these efforts, the more efficient Maryland's resilience system will be as a whole - saving lives and livelihoods, and reducing the costs of natural disasters in the process. Having an office that is responsible for and dedicated to the coordination of these complex and ambitious goals will allow Maryland to make sure every dollar and minute we spend on resilience goes as far as possible to benefit each and every one of our communities. **For that reason, I respectfully request a favorable report from this committee.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Fry Hester". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Senator Katie Fry Hester  
Carroll and Howard Counties