



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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February 17, 2021

Delegate Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee
House Office Building, Room 241
Annapolis, MD 21041

Re: Testimony **IN SUPPORT** of HB 542: Emergency Management – Chief Resilience Officer – Appointment and Duties

Dear Chair Pendergrass and Members of the Committee,

While the impacts of our changing climate can be felt across the nation and around the world, as a coastal state, Maryland is especially vulnerable to the effects of this global phenomena.

In their state climate summary for Maryland, NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information stated that both precipitation and the frequency of intense rainfall events is projected to increase, leading to an enhanced risk for flooding. Large additional increases in sea level rise are also projected with potentially significant environmental and economic impacts, according to NOAA.

In the absence of a more coordinated strategy, local jurisdictions are currently tackling these issues individually, sometimes with limited resources and expertise. The breadth of the problem demands a cohesive statewide plan that provides local government with necessary assistance and invites collaboration between state and local governments.

House Bill 542, proposed by Delegate Courtney Watson, would create the position of Chief Resilience Officer. The Chief Resilience Officer would coordinate the efforts of state and local agencies responsible for resilience associated with climate change, as identified in the Maryland Hazard Mitigation Plan. This important position would also be responsible for identifying and securing federal and state funding that will assist our local jurisdictions with implementing resiliency projects that keep our communities safe and environmentally sustainable. If created, this role would play an important part of building a system of resiliency within our state.

My Administration is committed to keeping Howard County prepared to respond to natural disasters and unforeseen challenges. In my first year as County Executive, I signed the Howard County Comprehensive Emergency Response and Recovery Plan, which incorporated lessons learned from the 2016 and 2018 "one-in-1,000-year" floods that impacted Historic Ellicott City into the County's emergency response and recovery processes. Last year, as part of our *EC Safe and Sound* plan, we secured full funding for five key flood mitigation projects while also continuing to educate and provide resources to our communities to help them be more prepared for unforeseen disasters.



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Over the past year, our resiliency has been on full display as our entire county government has worked nonstop during the COVID-19 global pandemic to provide residents with information and resources, set up testing and vaccine sites, and collaborate with MEMA to implement critical planning.

Local jurisdictions across our State are working to improve Maryland's resiliency to current and future hazards. Delegate Watson's bill will provide a valuable state-level coordinating officer to ensure that all relevant stakeholders can continue sharing information and best practices that will help us respond to emergencies and keep our residents and businesses secure.

For these and many other reasons, I urge a favorable report on House Bill 542.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Calvin Ball', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive