



SB-630 – Maryland Department of Emergency Management – Office of Resilience

Testimony before

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

February 24, 2022

Position: Favorable

Mr. Chair, Madame Vice Chair, and members of the committee, my name is Peter Alexander and I represent the 750+ members of Indivisible Howard County. IndivisibleHoCo is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony today in support of SB630. We appreciate Senator Hester's leadership in sponsoring this legislation along with 23 of her Senate colleagues.

Environmental, technological, and manmade hazards present increasingly severe and frequent threats to Marylanders. The state must be prepared to address the implications of climate change, sea level rise, cyber-attacks, and more through a coordinated, multi-agency approach.

Recently published data from a number of sources forecasting flooding due to global climate change found that losses due to flooding in the United States will jump more than 26 percent over the next three decades, and that disadvantaged communities will bear a greater share of the economic burden. Some Maryland counties, especially those bordering the Chesapeake Bay, are predicted to experience the highest levels of increased flood risk. The disastrous and deadly effects of increased flooding exacerbated by climate change have been witnessed right here in Maryland in the last few years.

By establishing an Office of Resilience and Chief Resilience Officer (CRO) within the Maryland Dept. of Emergency Management, Maryland's risk response will become more proactive, comprehensive, and coordinated in mitigating and limiting natural disaster and climate change impacts.

SB-630 will establish mechanisms to:

- Coordinate state and local agencies engaged in building resilience to risks related to climate change, as identified in the Maryland Hazard Mitigation Plan;
- Leverage funding streams and technical resources at the Federal, State, and Local levels to support Maryland resilience efforts;
- Work with the Adaptation and Resiliency Workgroup of the Maryland Commission on Climate Change to coordinate resilience strategy across state agencies, and update the resilience strategy for the State;
- Work across agencies to establish baseline indicators, goals, and metrics to guide resilience efforts, and to produce an economic analysis of the state's resilience efforts,
- Engage with stakeholders in communities and industries affected by climate change, with a priority on vulnerable populations.

The bill also includes a requirement for the CRO to produce a report that would include an overview of the Office's annual performance and a strategy for the next 1, 2, 5, and 10 years. This legislation passed in the Senate 46-0 in 2020.

While the State has many programs across numerous agencies that improve resilience, increased coordination is needed between each of these programs and local government. Creating an Office of Resilience within MDEM will strongly incorporate emergency management perspectives within those projects and programs.

We respectfully urge a favorable report.

Peter Alexander
Woodbine, MD