



SB630 Maryland Department of Emergency Management – Chief Resilience Officer

Education, Health and Environmental Committee:

Chair: Senator Paul Pinsky; Vice-Chair: Senator Cheryl Kagan

Testimony from:

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Chair Pinsky and members of the Education, Health, and Environment Committee thank you for allowing me to provide this testimony on behalf of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES).

Since its founding in 1925, UMCES has been leading the way toward better management of Maryland's natural resources and the protection and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay. It's often referred to as "the institution of the environment for the state of Maryland"

With more than 3,000 miles of shoreline and 72% of the state's population living and working along the coast, Maryland's coastal communities face particular risk to the impacts of a changing climate.

Since 1981, Maryland has experienced 66 'billion-dollar' weather related events resulting in an estimated \$10- 20 B in damages. NOAA tracks drought, flood, freeze, severe storm, tropical cyclone, wildfire, and winter storm events. Tropical storms were the cause of these billion dollar events, inflicting over 40% of the total damages. Droughts and severe storms were the second and third most costly weather events. In the period 1980-1989, the average was 0.7 events per year. This has increased by decade and 5 events were recorded in 2020. The increasing frequency of these extreme events are attributed to the changing climate. The rapid escalation of the frequency and severity of these events reinforce the urgent need for climate action for mitigation and adaptation.

This past January, UMCES released the first-of-its-kind Maryland Coastal Adaptation Report Card that gives a snapshot of the current adaptation status in Maryland's coastal counties and establishes a framework for measuring future progress.

Maryland is fairly well-adapted to handle continuing threats of climate change and earned an overall score of "B-." However, some indicators require significant investment to achieve adaptation goals. The most urgent challenge in the State is the location of critical facilities, largely in flood hazard areas, that must remain operational in emergencies.

This bill calls for the creation of a Chief Resilience Officer appointed by the Director of the Maryland Emergency Management Agency and is responsible for coordinating state and local efforts to build resilience to risks in the Hazard Mitigation Plan, particularly related to impacts related climate change.

If passed UMCES must coordinate with the office to: a) establish a baseline for the State and develop a statewide resilience assessment to support local government benchmarking for use in a statewide resilience tracker to help identify investment needs; b) develop indicators to monitor the effectiveness of resilience efforts and establish future goals; and c) produce an economic analysis and policy benchmark report and compare Maryland policies and efforts with those of other vulnerable states.

An unstable climate regime will impose new burdens on the state's planning and response capability, including a need for greater flexibility, greater interagency coordination; and greater ability to rapidly integrate new information and research findings. Therefore, the Chief Resilience Officer coordinating role and developing various reports and tools is important for the State of Maryland to begin planning for continued impacts due to climate change.

UMCES supports SB630 and seeks the Committee's favorable report.