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Education, Health, and
Environmental Affairs Committee

Chair, Joint Committee on
Cybersecurity, Information Technology
and Biotechnology



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of SB630 - Maryland Department of Emergency Management -
Office of Resilience**

February 24th, 2022

Chairman Pinsky, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee:

Thank you for your consideration of SB630. Over the past three years, I have had the honor of serving as the Senator from District 9, which includes Ellicott City. Like many communities in our state, Ellicott City has grappled with the issues of climate change and urban flooding. Within two years, my constituents experienced two separate “thousand-year floods” that took the lives of three people and caused millions of dollars in property damage. However, as a coastal state with many inland tributaries, flooding is endemic to our communities. Annapolis, Baltimore, Ocean City, and Ellicott City flood frequently, and other environmental, technological, and manmade hazards present a threat to our safety.

Under the leadership of Chair Pinsky, this committee passed bold climate change legislation in 2021 and is working to do the same again this year. It is absolutely critical that Maryland do our part to slow the heating of the planet and avoid irreversible damage; however, it is also true that only six states are less carbon intensive than us on a per capita basis. Even if Maryland achieved net-zero emissions tomorrow, we would still be damaged by the emissions of countries like China, India, Russia, and Saudi Arabia. Therefore, we must prepare for the worst.

Our state is projected to face up to \$19B 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 forethought, coordination, and accountability. In 2020, the Senate unanimously passed my bill to Establish a Chief Resilience Officer. While that did not make it through the House, I have continued to work with Secretary Strickland and the Maryland Department of Emergency Management, as well as other stakeholders, to expand the idea into a full office, as 14 other states have done.

SB630 is the result of this collaboration. Specifically, it will establish an Office of Resilience led by the Chief Resilience Officer in the Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM) to:

- coordinate federal and state prevention, protection, mitigation, and recovery-focused programs,
- develop flood risk assessment tools for use by statewide programs and projects,
- administer other programs as directed by the Chief Resilience Officer and Secretary of Emergency Management,
- prioritize vulnerable communities and ensuring investments are made with an environmental justice lens,
- conduct outreach and provide technical assistance to local jurisdictions to support the development of resiliency plans, and
- requires each agency to designate a liaison to collaborate with the office on specific goals.

This model has worked well in 14 other states, especially in the Mid-Atlantic region. Last year, the Environmental Defense Fund and National Emergency Management Association published a report on Resilience Officers, and this report has been included with my testimony for the bill file. North Carolina established their equivalent in 2018 and has been able to leverage over \$140M of federal and state funds to support local governments, businesses, and residents. Virginia similarly established the position in 2014 by executive order and codified the role in 2020.

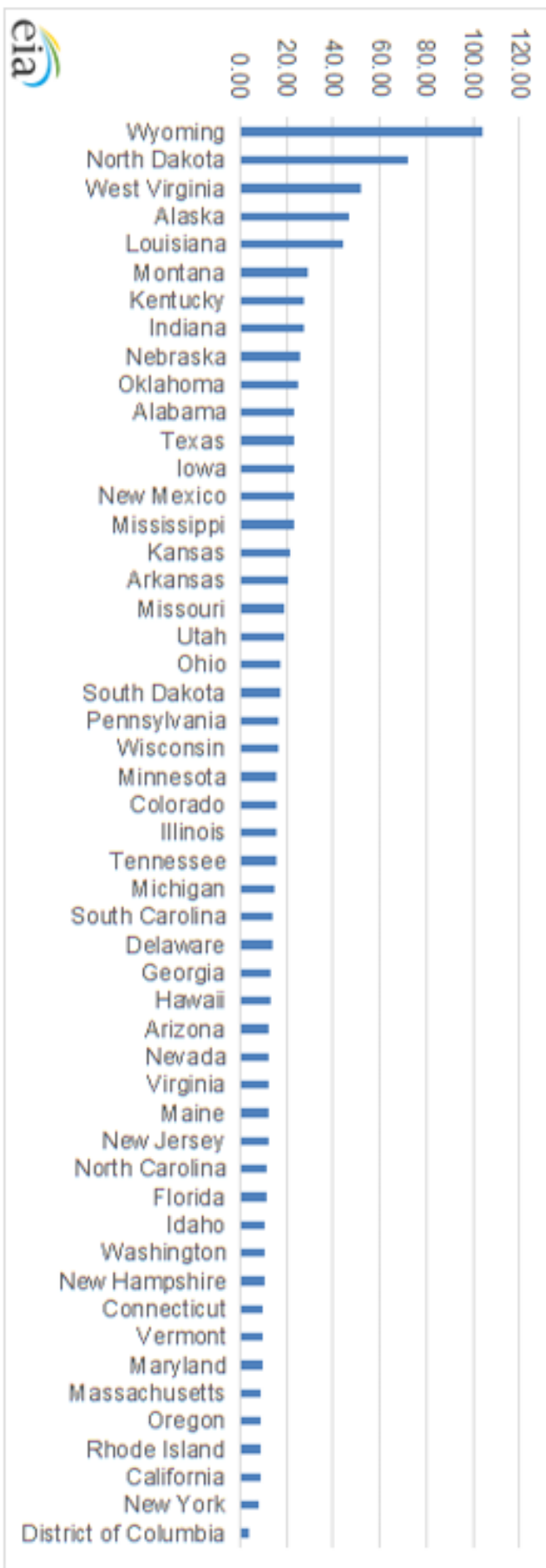
In summary, as we move forward to save our planet by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, we must simultaneously harden our state's defenses against a changing climate. By creating an Office of Resilience, we bring ourselves in line with a national trend and establish a more efficient, more accountable process for saving lives and reducing the costs of natural, technological, and manmade hazards. **For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable committee report on SB630**

Sincerely,



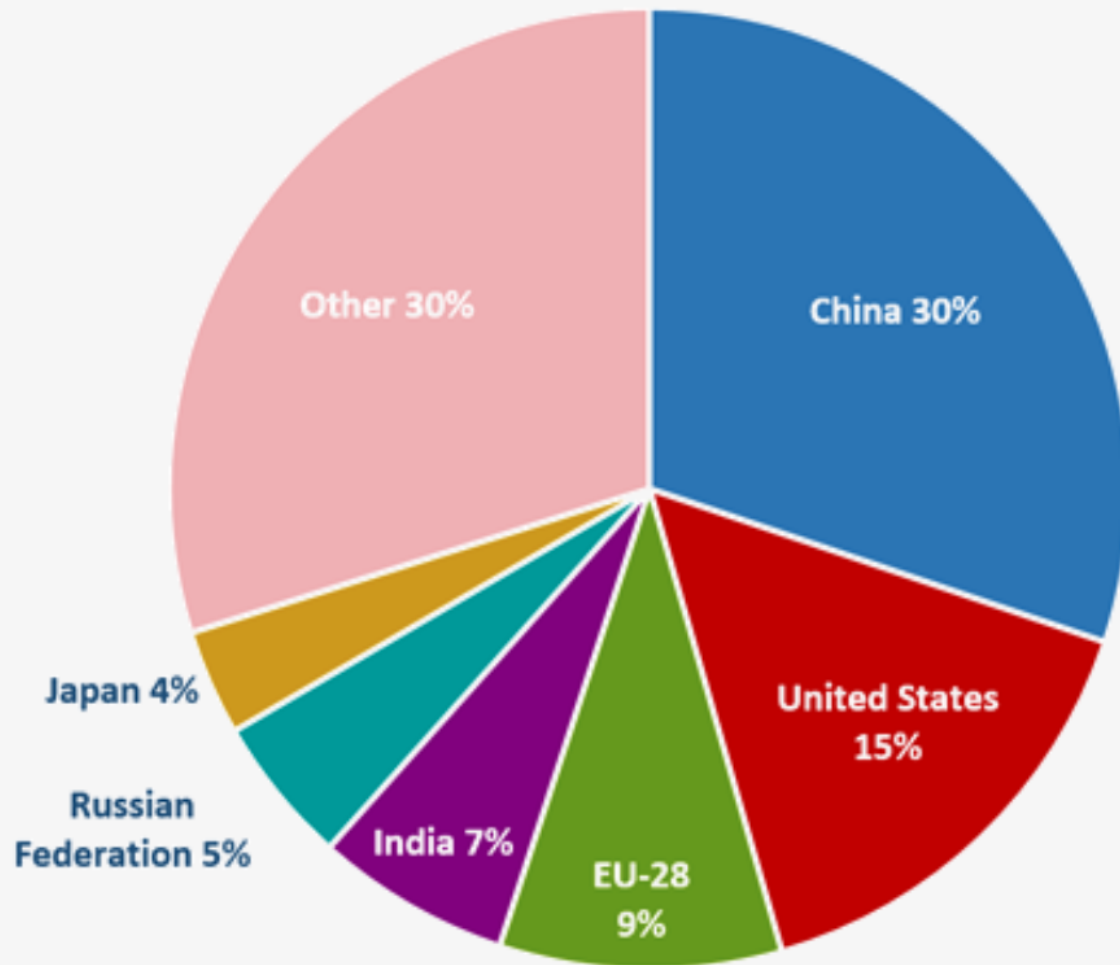
Senator Katie Fry Hester
Carroll and Howard Counties

Figure 2. Per capita energy-related carbon dioxide emissions by state, 2016
 metric tons carbon dioxide per person



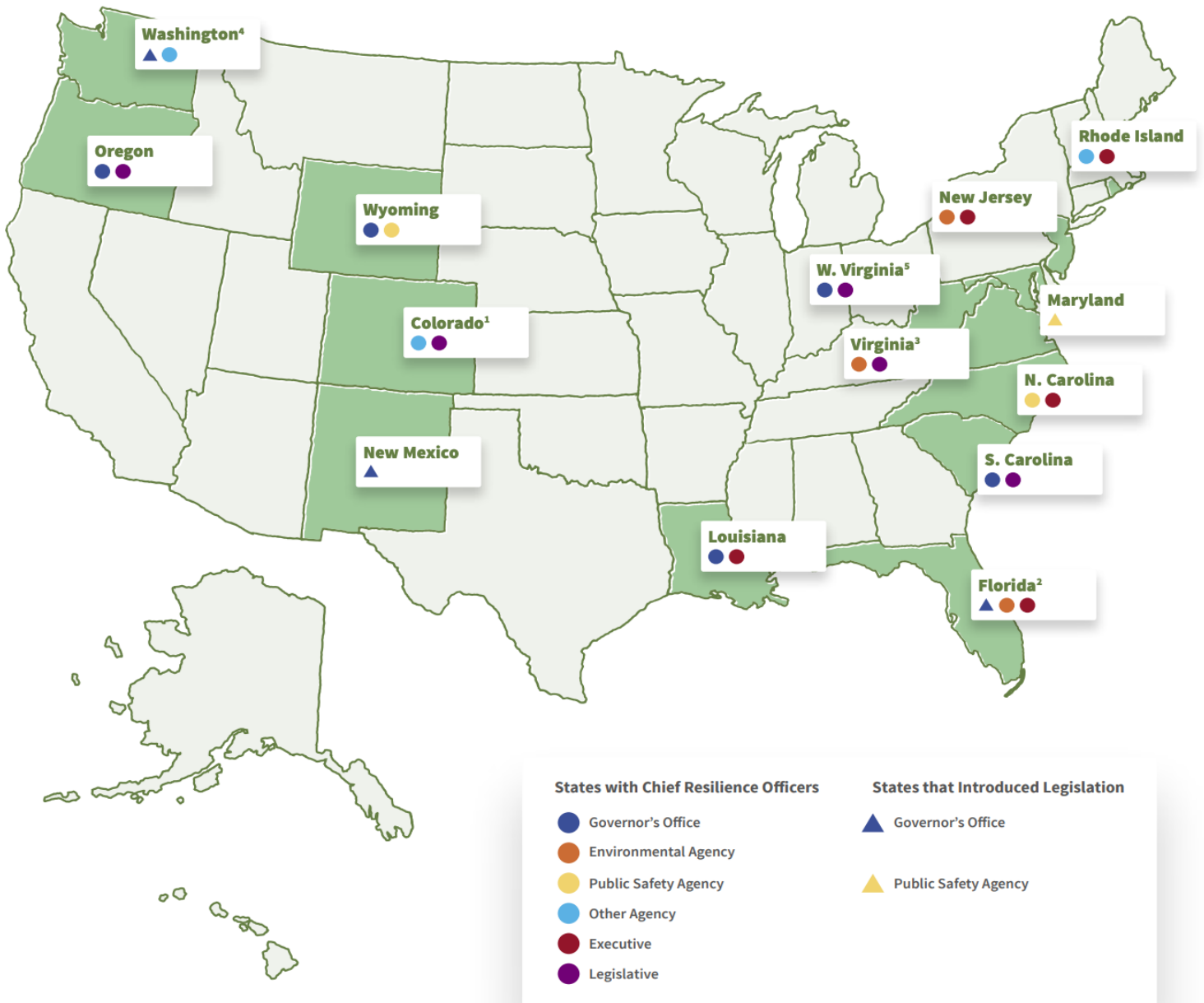
Source: EIA, State Energy Data System and EIA calculations made for this analysis.

2014 Global CO₂ Emissions from Fossil Fuel Combustion and Some Industrial Processes



Source: Boden, T.A., Marland, G., and Andres, R.J. (2017). [National CO₂ Emissions from Fossil-Fuel Burning, Cement Manufacture, and Gas Flaring: 1751-2014](#), Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Center, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, U.S. Department of Energy, doi 10.3334/CDIAC/00001_V2017.

STATES WITH OR EXPLORING CHIEF RESILIENCE OFFICER POSITIONS



¹ Initially in governor's office through executive authority and later created in the Department of Local Affairs by legislation.

² Initially in governor's office through executive authority and later given to the Secretary of Environmental Protection in a dual-hatted role.

³ Initially in Public Safety and Homeland Security by executive authority, then moved to Department of Natural Resources by executive authority. Ultimately codified by legislature in Department of Natural and Historic Resources.

⁴ The separately elected Commissioner of Public Lands installed a CRO in that Department in July 2021.

⁵ The legislature initially created the CRO position in the Department of Commerce and later moved to the Governor's office.

