



Maryland Emergency Management Association

www.marylandema.org

Joseph Theobald, *President* Michelle Lloyd, *Vice President* Shelly Gooding, *Secretary* Marianne Souders, *Treasurer*

Maryland General Assembly
House Environment & Transportation Committee
Room 251
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

March 26th, 2022

Dear Chairman Barve and members of the Environment & Transportation Committee,

The Maryland Emergency Management Association supports Senate Bill 630 - Maryland Department of Emergency Management – Office of Resilience, which aims to strengthen community resiliency in Maryland. We urge you to consider SB630 favorably for the following reasons:

In the past decade, the State of Maryland has experienced over a dozen declared disasters. According to the NOAA Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters data, disasters in Maryland across this same period have cost the state over \$5 billion in damages. Maryland faces risks from tropical cyclones, severe storms and flooding, winter storms, and droughts. The frequency and costs of these disasters are expected to continue to increase due to increasing severity, development and recovery costs, and climate impacts. Improving investment in resilience and hazard mitigation efforts can help reduce these impacts before disasters occur. It is estimated that for every dollar spent on mitigation, a community will save \$6 in future damages. With the establishment of an Office of Resilience, Maryland will be strategically poised to identify and implement these opportunities.

In recent years, the federal government has placed increased focus on resilience. In 2021, the Biden Administration announced nearly \$5 billion in resilience funding to help communities prepare for extreme weather and climate-related disasters. Recent and upcoming legislation like the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill and Build Back Better also include opportunities to support resilience with federal funding. These funding opportunities, however, often originate from different sources with their own sets of requirements. When attempting to access federal funding to support resilience efforts, communities often face three key challenges:

- Lack of technical assistance to identify opportunities and develop proposals to obtain grant funding;
- Lack of local champions to prioritize resilience efforts; and
- Inability to meet cost share for federal grants.

Due to these challenges, past funding has often favored those communities with capacity to match cost-sharing or administrative requirements.

The proposed Office of Resilience would help communities in Maryland overcome these challenges and access funding in an equitable manner by providing a program to help identify and obtain federal funds, providing technical support to help ensure smaller and vulnerable communities receive equal access, and building public-private partnerships to help overcome cost share challenges.



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Increased coordination has already proven effective to improving resilience in Maryland. The Maryland Community Resilience program leverages state and federal funding to promote resilience to flood hazards by bringing together three funding sources to create a cohesive planning approach. The Office of Resilience would expand on this concept by appointing a Chief Resilience Officer to communicate directly with other appointed resilience officer liaisons from essential agencies to bring a whole of government approach to the State's resilience efforts.

We appreciate your consideration and urge a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 630.

Respectfully Submitted,
Members of the MDEMA Legislative Committee
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