



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 706 – MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT – OFFICE OF RESILIENCE**

**CAHIRMAN KUMAR BARVE
VICE CHAIR DANA STEIN**

February 18, 2022

Good afternoon Chairman Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee. I am here today to ask for your support for HB 706. This bill will establish an Office of Resilience and Chief Resilience Officer (CRO) in the Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM) who will be tasked with coordinating State and Federal efforts to combat the risks associated with rising sea levels and the other effects of climate change. The office will begin reporting their work in 2024 and will coordinate with seven State agencies and other stakeholders, taking an all hands on deck approach to tackle this crisis. Additionally, this bill mandates that the CRO create plans to increase resiliency two, five, and ten years from now, ensuring that we see results in a timely manner. Positions like this are in place in 11 other states including Virginia and North Carolina and CROs have been able to secure hundreds of millions in funding to protect residents from the dangers climate change.

As some of you on this committee know, being a member of the Eastern Shore Delegation comes with unique challenges. We often find ourselves fighting against the tide to have our perspectives and the experiences of our constituents heard among the more numerous voices of the Western Shore. The issue of climate change though, is one where the Eastern Shore's voice should be heard alongside all of the environmental advocates across the State because we are at such great risk if we fail to take decisive action.

A survey published recently by the Union of Concerned Scientists identified 167 communities in 13 states that by 2035 will face chronic flooding at least 26 times annually. **Twenty-two of those communities are in Maryland, most on the Eastern Shore.** The town of Crisfield, Md., on the lower Eastern Shore, will face chronic flooding of more than half its land area within roughly 20 years. Taylor's Island will be under water completely in the next 100 years.

These facts should not undermine the risk other parts of the State face. We all remember the destruction and devastation flooding caused in Ellicott City. My partnership with Delegate Watson and Senator Hester on this bill reflects this should be the focus for the entire State.

A central office in the State to coordinate actions will not only increase the effectiveness of all of our combined efforts, but bring awareness to those who cannot see the forest for the trees.

For this reason I am asking for a favorable report on HB 706. Thank you for your time.