

22 February 2022

Delegate Kumar Barve  
Chair of the Environment and Transportation Committee  
Room 251  
House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Letter of Support for HB 0706  
Maryland Department of Emergency Management – Office of Resilience

Dear Chairman Barve and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

We support this bill to establish the Office of Resilience and coordinate State and local efforts to build resilience to risks identified in the Maryland Hazard Mitigation Plan. This office will identify and secure funding, technical assistance and work to establish best practices to prepare for, mitigate and react to the environmental risks that continue to grow everywhere.

This bill will aid and assist vulnerable communities and focus investment with an eye toward equity and environmental justice. The bill also secures cooperation across multiple state agencies / entities to combat flooding in residential areas, informing the public and further it works in the agricultural sector to meet the goals of the office.

AIA Maryland and many of our colleagues across the US have acted to support communities responding to disasters as we proactively consider and develop measures for preparedness. Disasters faced from forest fires, tornadoes, hurricanes, tropical storms and heavy rains – and the recent polar vortex that greatly affected communities and deeply impacted individuals lives, forces us to think and learn from these events and to assess how can we be better prepared and mitigate the impacts of disasters.

We support establishing a Maryland Office of Resilience. We believe that initiatives should proactively mitigate potential flood hazards and the state should be ready to react and respond appropriately with emergency and recovery efforts. We encourage State departments and agencies like Maryland Department of Emergency Management to work with organizations who can bring expertise to planning and code development when considering issues of flood mitigation and, organizations that can provide post disaster assistance.

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) actively participates in building code development and enforcement and permitting which impacts communities and structures that already exist as well as new construction. We encourage the Office of Resilience to work with organizations like The AIA to train members and share lessons from post-disaster building assessments.

We are excited that we have recently signed an MOU with the Maryland Department of Emergency Management to respond and assist in post-disaster situations. We continue to grow our network of licensed architects who are trained to assist with post-disaster building safety assessments and we continue to connect with other state chapters across the country to build knowledge and share lessons learned.

We are glad that Maryland will have a coordinating office of resilience like most coastal states along the Atlantic including New York, New Jersey, Virginia, North Carolina, Florida and Louisiana. These states share similar challenges. Extending our reach along the coast with a focused effort will improve our ability to learn from others and share what has worked for us.

We believe that incorporating building resilience in our state's planning will assist communities to assess how to lower risks and enable them to have a broad support network to assist should a disaster strike. We support House Bill 0706 and planning efforts that will enable us to continue to enjoy and take pride in 3,000 miles plus of shoreline and our many river, and stream valleys throughout the state.

Sincerely,



Laurence A. Frank, AIA  
Director, Past President

  
Chris Parts, AIA  
Director, Past President