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Charlotte Davis, Executive Director

John Hartline, Chair

March 09, 2022

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
Chair of the House Environment and Transportation Committee
251 House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairman Barve:

The Rural Maryland Council supports House Bill 706- Maryland Department of Emergency Management - Office of Resilience. The bill will prepare Maryland for future emergencies, specifically those caused by climate change, by establishing the Office of Resilience in the Maryland Department of Emergency Management. The Office of Resilience will include members of key State entities and agencies, including the Maryland Agricultural Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO). As climate change causes increases in temperature, rising sea levels, and more flooding, the underserved areas of Maryland will be most at risk. The creation of the Office of Resilience will prepare Maryland's communities now for the emergencies they will face in the future.

Maryland needs to be prepared for the serious events that are already taking place and will worsen as time goes on. Those who live on the State's eastern shore will face loss of land, including homes and businesses; farmers will face more loss of crops due to the increased temperatures; and areas near bodies of water will face harsher and more regular flooding. The areas that will be hurt the most by these events will be the rural areas and other underserved areas of the State. The Office of Resilience will prioritize vulnerable communities and environmental justice, helping them prepare for and reduce the damages caused from certain events. Some of the Office's goals are eliminating flooding residential areas, building neighborhood resiliency, de-concentrating poverty, and designing coastal resiliency.

The office will work with State agencies and entities to accomplish their goals. One of the state agencies will be MARBIDCO, which will assist in building climate resilience expertise through the Maryland extension to support best practices in agriculture. Increases in temperatures and drought will negatively impact agricultural production and ultimately cause disruptions in supply. These shortages will have multiple effects, such as increased prices to both everyday buyers and other farmers that rely on certain crops to feed livestock. A NASA study published in the journal *Nature Food* reports that climate change may decrease corn production by 24% near end of the century and that these affects could start as early as 2030. Developing plans to address such complications must start now before the long-term effects are felt by the citizens of Maryland.

For some, the word resiliency has meant the ability to withstand environmental shocks. For others, it means the ability to withstand financial shocks. But the pandemic has made it clear that a resilient community is one that can withstand whatever is thrown at it. A holistic approach is needed, one that includes development and identifies new opportunities. As a result, we will ensure that all Marylanders are prosperous with thriving resources, vibrant economies, and healthy connected communities. The Rural Maryland Council respectfully requests your favorable support of House Bill 706.

Sincerely,

Charlotte Davis,
Rural Maryland Council, Executive Director