



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

ROCKVILLE: 240-777-6550

ANNAPOLIS: 240-777-8270

SB 813

DATE: February 23, 2023

SPONSOR: Senator A. Washington

ASSIGNED TO: Education, Energy and the Environment

CONTACT PERSON: Garrett Fitzgerald (garrett.fitzgerald@montgomerycountymd.gov)

POSITION: Favorable (Department of Environmental Protection)

Comprehensive Flood Management Grant Program - Environmental Justice Funding

Flooding is the most frequent severe weather event and the costliest natural disaster. Floods not only affect high-risk coastal areas but according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), 25% of flood insurance claims come from moderate-to-low-risk areas like Montgomery County. Just one inch of floodwater can cause up to \$25,000 in damage. Montgomery County is committed to addressing adverse flood impacts to residents and businesses in the County.

Flooding can be especially devastating to community members with pre-existing vulnerabilities that might impact their capacity to prevent, prepare for, and cope with flooding. Pollution exposure, sensitive populations, and socioeconomic factors can contribute to systemic vulnerability and cause some communities to be at inherently higher risk. The Maryland Department of the Environment's EJ Screening Tool analyzes key socioeconomic factors to identify potential environmental justice ("EJ") or overburdened communities through calculation of an EJ Score.

This bill will require that at least 40% of funding provided under the Comprehensive Flood Management Grant Program be used for projects located in or directly benefitting census tracts with an EJ Score of .76 or greater. This is an important provision to ensure that funding is prioritized to support communities most vulnerable to the impacts of the flooding. Montgomery County includes more than two dozen census tracts that would qualify under this requirement.

This bill will also increase the minimum budget of the Comprehensive Flood Management Grant Program to \$20 million starting in fiscal year 2025. This represents a significant budget increase, and likely still meets only a small percentage of the need and opportunity for this program to benefit Maryland residents.

We respectfully request that the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 813.