



Office of The Mayor Celina Benitez

1 Municipal Place, Mount Rainier, Maryland 20712 Telephone: (301) 985-6585 MountRainierMD.org

Testimony: Favorable Support of HB449 - Comprehensive Flood Management Grant Program

Dear Chair/Delegate Korman & Vice Chair/Delegate Boyce and members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 449, the Comprehensive Flood Management Grant Program, and to urge the committee's favorable consideration of this crucial legislation. This bill represents a significant step forward in addressing the urgent needs of underserved and overburdened communities as Mount Rainier that are disproportionately impacted by flooding and other environmental challenges.

HB449 is essential because it establishes a dedicated funding mechanism for flood management projects, ensuring that our communities are better equipped to mitigate the devastating effects of flooding events. By requiring an annual appropriation of at least \$20.0 million for the comprehensive flood management grant program, the bill demonstrates a commitment to investing in proactive measures to protect our residents and infrastructure from the escalating threats of flooding.

Furthermore, the provision stipulating that at least 40% of the funding be allocated to projects benefiting underserved or overburdened communities is a critical component of this legislation. It acknowledges the disproportionate burden borne by these communities and seeks to rectify historical inequities in access to resources and infrastructure. By prioritizing investment in these communities, we can address longstanding disparities and ensure that all residents have equitable access to flood protection measures.

The definitions of "underserved community" and "overburdened community" provided in the bill align with existing provisions of the Environment Article of the Maryland Code, specifically those governing the Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities. These definitions are comprehensive and reflective of the multifaceted challenges faced by vulnerable communities, including socioeconomic status, race, and environmental health indicators.

In conclusion, HB449 is a vital piece of legislation that will have a tangible and positive impact on the resilience of our communities in the face of increasing flood risks. I urge the committee Favorable support of HB449 and to prioritize the needs of underserved and overburdened communities in our flood management efforts.

Please feel free to contact me at 301-985-6585 or via email MayorBenitez@MountRainierMD.org if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Celina Benitez

Mayor Celina Benitez, City of Mount Rainier