

Thursday, February 22, 2024

Dear Honorable Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Town of Forest Heights to express our strong support for House Bill 449, which proposes the establishment of the Comprehensive Flood Management Grant Program. This program is critically needed to support underserved and overburdened communities that are increasingly vulnerable to the devastating impacts of flooding.

In Forest Heights, the threat of flooding is not just a distant possibility but a significant and growing concern that threatens our community's safety, economic stability, and overall quality of life. The risk of flooding over the next 30 years is alarmingly high, indicating that flooding is likely to become a disruptive factor in our day-to-day lives. This risk assessment is based on the level of danger to properties, emphasizing the severity of the potential impacts rather than the sheer number of properties at risk.

The consequences of flooding extend far beyond property damage. In our worst example, flooding has eroded land behind seven homes in Forest Heights, creating a ravine more than 100 feet long and more than two dozen feet deep. The comprehensive approach outlined in HB 449 to manage flood risks and mitigate their impacts is not only welcome but necessary for communities like ours.

We are particularly encouraged by the bill's focus on providing funding to underserved and overburdened communities, which often lack the resources to adequately prepare for and respond to flood events. By prioritizing these communities, HB 449 acknowledges the importance of equity in environmental and disaster resilience planning.

The Town of Forest Heights is committed to working with state agencies, neighboring municipalities, and community organizations to enhance our flood management strategies and build a more resilient community. We believe that the Comprehensive Flood Management Grant Program established by HB 449 will be an invaluable resource in these efforts.

We thank you for your attention to this critical issue and for your efforts to protect Maryland's communities from the increasing threat of flooding. We urge the committee to support HB 449, ensuring that towns like Forest Heights have the necessary support and resources to safeguard our residents and infrastructure against the challenges posed by flooding.

Sincerely,
Troy Barrington Lilly
Mayor
Town of Forest Heights