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MAYOR

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HB0233

February 7, 2024

TO: Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 233 -Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area Protection Program-Climate, Equity, and Administrative Provisions

POSITION: Support

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 233.

HB0233 is sponsored by the Maryland Critical Area Commission with an intention to weave equity, climate resilience into local critical areas program and allows local jurisdictions to corresponding update their local Critical Area legislation to with specific actions and/or recommendations. The passage of this bill will require Baltimore City and other jurisdictions in Maryland to adopt updates to our local codes and for Baltimore City's Critical Area manual to comply with the measures included in the bill, while allowing for flexibility with the timeline.

Baltimore City's 2019 Sustainability Plan is anchored to racial, economic and environmental equity goals as detailed in the plan's Equity Implementation Guidelines. The city's updated Disaster Preparedness and Climate Action Plan also leverages this same equity lens that guides climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies across the city. The addition of resilience and climate change concepts into Critical Area regulations allows the city to update the local current Critical Area program to incorporate elements that would support actions/recommendations from Baltimore City's 2019 Sustainability Plan, 2020 Nuisance Flood Plan 2023 Disaster Preparedness Plan (DP3) and 2024 Climate Action Plan (CAP) and those of our Office of Equity and Civil Rights.

Climate-related standards established at the state level will help support the types of increased development standards recommended in the city's FEMA-regulated hazard mitigation plan (DP3) without impacting the relative stringency of Baltimore's Critical Area regulations when compared to other jurisdictions. HB0233/SB-306 also potentiates funding from the state to support local program updates and implementation. Section 8-1808(a)(2) & (3) – Local Program Assistance – could provide funding from the state to support local program updates and implementation. Local program assistance for critical area programs has been provided in past years, but these funds have declined over time. Reinvestment into local critical areas programs is critical for future costal resilience planning.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully request a **favorable** report on SB0306/HB0233.

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