



**SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**Senate Bill 739**

**Climate Change, Homeowner's Insurance, and Emergency Management - Study**

**February 25, 2026**

**Favorable with Amendment**

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on Senate Bill 739. The bill directs the University System of Maryland (USM) to conduct a comprehensive study examining how climate change is affecting homeowner's insurance markets and shaping the state's emergency and disaster preparedness needs. The bill also requires the evaluation of federal and private flood insurance programs, an assessment of emerging risks facing Maryland communities, and recommend actions to improve insurer responsiveness and resilience.

The USM is comprised of twelve distinguished institutions and three regional centers. We award eight out of every ten bachelor's degrees in the State. Each of USM's 12 institutions has a distinct and unique approach to the mission of educating students and promoting the economic, intellectual, and cultural growth of its surrounding community. These institutions are located throughout the state, from western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, with the flagship campus in the Washington suburbs. The USM includes three Historically Black Institutions, comprehensive institutions and research universities, and the country's largest public online institution.

The USM supports the goals of the legislation and stand ready to work with our institutional and state agency partners to carry out the study as described. At the same time, we suggest two modifications to strengthen the bill.

Given the extent of the work involved and the expertise needed to develop an effective study, we anticipate there would be some need for funding to cover work group expenses, meeting costs, printing, specialized IT assistance, and any expert consulting that may be needed. We'd suggest a nominal budget of \$150,000 be included in the bill to cover such expenses.

Finally, given the breadth of this study and the need for iterative reviews including a public comment period, we suggest a deadline of July 1, 2027 to be a more appropriate timeframe for completion.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to share our comments on Senate Bill 739. We look forward to working with you and the oversight group to review flood insurance programs, develop recommendations for incentivizing private homeowners to mitigate damage from extreme weather events, and identify the policy, funding, and training improvements described in the bill.



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