

**Wednesday February 19, 2020**

**TO:** Paul Pinsky, Chair of Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee and Committee Members

**FROM:** Joshua Kurtz, The Nature Conservancy, Policy and Government Relations Director

**POSITION:** Support SB 457 Local Governments – Resilience Authorities – Authorization

**Position:**

The Nature Conservancy (the Conservancy) strongly supports SB 457 offered by Senator Elfreth. SB 427 enables counties and municipalities to develop Resilience Authorities. These authorities would establish funding streams to implement projects aimed at building resilience in communities.

This approach allows local governments to prioritize interventions toward their most pressing impacts from climate change based on local geographic, economic and social factors and to develop projects that minimize and mitigate those issues. Across Maryland, local governments are experiencing the impacts of higher sea levels, increased erosion, higher temperatures and changing patterns of precipitation. Enabling the creation of the Resilience Authorities would provide opportunities to fund critical projects, like the Annapolis City Dock project, intended to build local resilience and reduce risks. These funds could also be leveraged to access new grant opportunities through the Federal Emergency Management Agency's new Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program. This fund has between \$300-500M appropriated annually for grants to capital projects that proactively improve resilience.

The Conservancy commends Senator Elfreth and the co-sponsors for identifying a solution that unlocks resources and improves local governments' flexibility to tackle these challenges. Building proactive solutions will allow the State to save money in the future; according to a recent analysis by National Institute of Building Sciences, every \$1 spent building resilience saves \$6 when disasters strike. Building these funding opportunities is critical to the health and safety of Marylanders.

**Therefore, we urge a favorable report on SB 457.**