



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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February 18, 2020

Delegate Kumar Barve, Chairman
Environment and Transportation Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
Room 251, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Testimony **IN SUPPORT** of House Bill 539 – Local Governments – Resilience
Authorities – Authorization

Dear Chairman Barve,

Earlier this month, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) issued a sobering statistic on climate change – in 141 years of climate records, there had never been a warmer January than January 2020.

The effects of our changing climate can be felt not only in the rising temperature but also in the increasing severity of extreme weather. In their state climate summary for Maryland, NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information stated that both precipitation and the frequency of intense rainfall events is projected to increase, leading to an enhanced risk for flooding. Large additional increases in sea level rise are also projected with significant environmental and economic impacts, according to NOAA.

In the face of this increasing threat, Maryland's local jurisdictions need to find new ways to protect their citizens from the impacts of climate change. At the same time, other important priorities, like education and transportation, also require significant investment. To help Maryland's counties pay for these often-costly new resilience infrastructure projects without taking away from other priorities, innovative financing structures will need to be utilized.

House Bill 539 is enabling legislation to allow local jurisdictions to create resilience authorities – financing bodies that can issue bonds outside of a county's normal budget process to fund infrastructure projects that mitigate climate change. This authority would also have the ability to construct and maintain resilience infrastructure, acquire property, and collect fees for services. This authority would be solely focused on funding resilience infrastructure projects, ensuring that these important projects have the resources needed to be successfully constructed.

In Howard County, an authority like this could be used to fund the Ellicott City Safe and Sound plan, a comprehensive flood mitigation plan that prioritizes public safety, supports our business and property owners, and preserves as much of our historic town as possible. The plan includes several large infrastructure projects that will work together to reduce flood water on Main Street to less than one foot in the event of a 100-year storm event. Safe and Sound represents a significant investment in the safety of Howard County's citizens and the resilience authority authorized under House Bill 539 could be an important tool in helping to fund this plan.

Many other jurisdictions across the state could also benefit from the use of this authority, including places like Annapolis and Baltimore City that have recently experienced flood events.

For these and many other reasons, I ask for your support and passage of House Bill 539

All the Best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Calvin Ball". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive