



March 27, 2024

SUPPORT SB 148

Comprehensive Flood Management Grant Program - Funding for Underserved and Overburdened Communities

Chairs Korman and Barnes, and Members of the Committees:

Maryland League of Conservation Voters and the organizations cosigned below are writing in support of SB 148, a bill to increase funding for the Comprehensive Flood Management Grant Program (CFMGP) and to allocate at least 40% of this funding for projects located in or directly benefiting underserved or overburdened communities.

Immediate effects of flooding are well understood. We can all picture, and many of us have experienced, floodwaters rushing through our streets during a storm, damaging our homes and community infrastructure. Flooding can also have longer term impacts if its effects are not fully remediated, like the presence of black mold in homes, which is an asthma trigger and respiratory irritant. We agree with the [Maryland Department of the Environment's assessment of the CFMGP](#): With climate change resulting in more frequent and intense storms in Maryland, the CFMGP is more relevant now than ever.

This bill, through its allocation of funds to overburdened and underserved communities, recognizes that those who contribute least to climate change are often the ones to suffer first and worst from its consequences. Incorporating the federal Justice 40 initiative across environmental programs is one way we can correct for past injustices, and support communities who bear the brunt of pollution and environmental degradation.

We are asking that the committees pass SB 148 and HB 449 in the same posture, with the sponsor amendments introduced at the House hearing. There was an additional amendment added in the Senate (found in lines 22-23 on p.4 of the reprint) that added "areas in which over 90% of households are at extreme risk of flooding in the next 30 years" to be included in the 40% carveout for the funds.

In our assessment, the second amendment weakens the environmental justice provision of the bill, which originally allocated at least 40% of funds from the Comprehensive Flood Management Grant Program to overburdened and underserved communities. Adding this amendment calls into question two things:

- a. How do you calculate this percentage? Is it a metric we already have? And, more importantly,
- b. Adding this metric to the 40% provision means that you could have a mostly affluent, white community prone to flooding that would now be eligible for funding that was meant for overburdened/underserved communities, communities that face a high pollution burden and have been historically excluded from resources.

We thank Senator Washington for his leadership in introducing this bill and Delegate Ivey for introducing the crossfile (HB449), which this committee passed last year, and urge a favorable report.

We are joined by:

Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Climate XChange Maryland

Indivisible Howard County

League of Women Voters of Maryland

Maryland United for Peace and Justice

ShoreRivers

Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

The Nature Conservancy