



## HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

3430 Courthouse Drive ■ Ellicott City, Maryland 21043 ■ 410-313-2013 Voice/Relay

Calvin Ball  
Howard County Executive  
cball@howardcountymd.gov

www.howardcountymd.gov  
FAX 410-313-3051

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Delegate Kumar P. 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 428 – Comprehensive Flood Management Grant Program – Awards for Flood Damage and Mandatory Funding

Dear Chairman Barve,

On July 30, 2016, Ellicott City, Maryland – a historic mill town established in the late 1700s – was hit by a storm that pounded the town with nearly six inches of rain over two hours. This rain resulted in a flash flood that took two lives and devastated the area. Following the flood, residents and business owners quickly began rebuilding and a year later, it was estimated that 90 percent of businesses had reopened, and more than 70 percent of households had returned, a true testament to the resiliency of our community. At the time, the storm was called a 1-in-1,000-year event.

A mere 22 months later, it happened again.

When destructive weather events strike, aside from the obvious emotional and monetary toll faced by those directly impacted, there is a tremendous economic impact to the county. As a result of the 2016 flood, Howard County incurred costs of \$11 million to repair the damage to Ellicott City. Since the 2018 flood, the county has incurred \$27.1 million in additional costs for debris removal, infrastructure repairs, and other emergency work.

This is money that was largely unbudgeted. After each storm, the county transferred funds from other priorities to do the work necessary to keep the businesses and residents of Ellicott City safe. While there are some opportunities to receive reimbursement from federal agencies, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Federal Highway Administration, that process can be cumbersome and does not come close to covering the full cost of the destruction.

The legislation you are considering today be a resource for counties and municipalities across the state impacted by severe weather by providing grant funding for infrastructure repairs, debris removal, and emergency protection work associated with a flood event. In addition, HB 428 would allow impacted jurisdictions to use grant funding for flood control and watershed capital projects aimed at reducing the likelihood of another flood event, as well as for automated flood warning projects.

Due to the nature of severe weather events, emergency managers may have only minutes to alert the public that flash flooding is imminent. Automated flood warning systems, such as sirens or voice systems, are critical to ensuring that the public has as much notice as possible and can quickly move to higher ground.

Our recently announced Ellicott City Safe and Sound plan – a comprehensive flood mitigation and economic recovery plan for Ellicott City – includes the need for additional flood control and watershed capital projects, as well as an emergency alert system.

As County Executive, the safety of every resident is my most sacred responsibility, which is why I recently instructed my Office of Emergency Management to purchase two temporary speaker arrays that will emit incredibly loud tones when Ellicott City is in danger of flash flooding. These speakers are a temporary solution while we continue to explore a permanent alert and warning system. In addition to the county funding we will provide, if passed, HB 428 would be one of many sources we would pursue to assist us with funding the new alert system.

While Ellicott City has received the bulk of the coverage over the last few years, many other parts of Maryland have experienced flooding, including Baltimore City, Western Maryland, and Frederick. These events wreak havoc on the communities in which they occur, as well as the county as a whole. While HB 428 would not solve the problem entirely, the grant program that would be created by this proposed legislation would be incredibly helpful for all the counties in Maryland that deal with flooding.

For these and many other reasons, I ask for your support and passage of House Bill 428.

All the Best,



Calvin Ball  
Howard County Executive