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**SENATE BILL NO. 551**

Offered January 12, 2022

Prefiled January 12, 2022

A *BILL to amend and reenact §§ 2.2-222.4, 10.1-602, 10.1-658, and 10.1-659 of the Code of Virginia, relating to flood resiliency and protection.*

Patrons—Marsden, Lewis and Ebbin

Referred to Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

**1. That §§ 2.2-222.4, 10.1-602, 10.1-658, and 10.1-659 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:**

**§ 2.2-222.4. Chief Resilience Officer.**

A. The Governor shall designate a Chief Resilience Officer. The Chief Resilience Officer shall serve as the primary coordinator of resilience and adaptation initiatives in Virginia and as the primary point of contact regarding issues related to resilience and recurrent flooding. The Chief Resilience Officer shall be equally responsible for all urban, suburban, and rural areas of the Commonwealth.

B. The Chief Resilience Officer, in consultation with the Special Assistant to the Governor for Coastal Adaptation and Protection, shall:

1. Identify and monitor those areas of the Commonwealth that are at greatest risk from recurrent flooding and increased future flooding and recommend actions that both the private and public sectors should consider in order to increase the resilience of such areas;

2. Upon the request of any locality in the Commonwealth in which is located a substantial flood defense or catchment area, including a levee, reservoir, dam, catch basin, or wetland or lake improved or constructed for the purpose of flood control, review and comment on plans for the construction or substantial reinforcement of such flood defense or catchment area; and

3. Initiate and assist with the pursuit of funding opportunities for resilience initiatives at both the state and local levels and help to oversee and coordinate funding initiatives of all agencies of the Commonwealth.

4. *Beginning July 1, 2023, and every two years thereafter, report to the Governor and the General Assembly on the status of flood resilience in the Commonwealth. The report shall serve as an evaluation of flood protection for critical infrastructure, including human and natural infrastructure. The report shall identify risks to critical transportation, energy, communication, water and food supply, waste management, health, and emergency services infrastructure. The report shall also include the status of flood resilience planning. In preparing the report, the Chief Resilience Officer shall also coordinate with the Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and shall be assisted by all relevant Secretariats and agencies.*

**§ 10.1-602. Powers and duties of Department.**

The Department shall:

1. Develop a ~~flood protection plan~~ *Virginia Flood Protection Master Plan (the Plan)* for the Commonwealth. This ~~plan~~ *Plan* shall be a place-specific plan for mitigating severe and repetitive flooding and shall, at a minimum, (i) base decision making on the best-available science; (ii) identify and address socioeconomic inequities and strive to enhance equity through the adaptation and protection measures by considering all areas of recurrent flooding; (iii) recognize the importance of protecting and enhancing natural infrastructure and nature-based approaches to flood mitigation, when possible; (iv) utilize community and regional scale planning to the maximum extent possible, seeking region-specific approaches tailored to the needs of individual communities; and (v) include an understanding of fiscal realities and focus on cost-effective solutions for the protection and adaptation of communities, businesses, and critical infrastructure. The Plan shall include, at a minimum:

a. An inventory of flood-prone areas;

b. An inventory of flood protection studies;

c. A record of flood damages;

d. Strategies to prevent or mitigate flood damage; and

e. The collection and distribution of information relating to flooding and flood plain management.

The ~~flood protection plan~~ *Plan* shall be reviewed and updated by the Department on a regular basis, but at least once every five years, and for each of the items listed in provisions a through e, the plan shall state when that provision was last updated and when the next update is planned. The plan shall be maintained in an online format so as to be easily accessed by other government entities and by the

59 public. The online plan shall contain links to the most current information available from other federal,  
60 state, and local sources. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Department  
61 upon request.

62 2. Serve as the coordinator of all flood protection programs and activities in the Commonwealth,  
63 including the coordination of federal flood protection programs administered by the United States Army  
64 Corps of Engineers, the United States Department of Agriculture, the Federal Emergency Management  
65 Agency, the United States Geological Survey, the Tennessee Valley Authority, other federal agencies  
66 and local governments.

67 3. Make available flood and flood damage reduction data to localities for planning purposes, in order  
68 to assure necessary local participation in the planning process and in the selection of desirable  
69 alternatives which will fulfill the intent of this article. This shall include the development of a data base  
70 to include (i) all flood protection projects implemented by federal agencies and (ii) the estimated value  
71 of property damaged by major floods.

72 4. Assist localities in their management of flood plain activities in cooperation with the Department  
73 of Housing and Community Development.

74 5. Carry out the provisions of this article in a manner which will ensure that the management of  
75 flood plains will preserve the capacity of the flood plain to carry and discharge a hundred year flood.

76 6. Make, in cooperation with localities, periodic inspections to determine the effectiveness of local  
77 flood plain management programs, including an evaluation of the enforcement of and compliance with  
78 local flood plain management ordinances, rules and regulations.

79 7. Coordinate with the United States Federal Emergency Management Agency to ensure current  
80 knowledge of the identification of flood-prone communities and of the status of applications made by  
81 localities to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program.

82 8. Establish guidelines which will meet minimum requirements of the National Flood Insurance  
83 Program in furtherance of the policy of the Commonwealth to assure that all citizens living in  
84 flood-prone areas may have the opportunity to indemnify themselves from flood losses through the  
85 purchase of flood insurance under the regular flood insurance program of the National Flood Insurance  
86 Act of 1968 as amended.

87 9. Subject to the provisions of the Appropriations Act, provide financial and technical assistance to  
88 localities in an amount not to exceed fifty percent of the nonfederal costs of flood protection projects.

89 10. *Serve as the lead administrator for the Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan and the Virginia*  
90 *Flood Protection Master Plan.*

91 11. *Implement the Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan and the Virginia Flood Protection Master*  
92 *Plan.*

93 12. *Ensure that the Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan and the Virginia Flood Protection*  
94 *Master Plan are integrated.*

95 **§ 10.1-658. State interest in resilience and flood control.**

96 A. The General Assembly declares that storm events and rising tidal waters cause recurrent flooding  
97 of Virginia's land resources and result in the loss of life, damage to property, unsafe and unsanitary  
98 conditions and the disruption of commerce and government services, placing at risk the health, safety  
99 and welfare of those citizens living in flood-prone areas of the Commonwealth. Flood waters disregard  
100 jurisdictional boundaries, and the public interest requires the management of flood-prone areas in a  
101 manner which prevents injuries to persons, damage to property and pollution of state waters.

102 B. The General Assembly, ~~therefore,~~ supports and encourages those measures which prevent,  
103 mitigate, and alleviate the effects of *sea level rise*, stormwater surges, and *all causes of recurrent*  
104 *flooding*, and declares that the expenditure of public funds and any obligations incurred in the  
105 development of flood control and other civil works projects, the benefits of which may accrue to any  
106 county, municipality, or region in the Commonwealth, are necessary expenses of local and state  
107 government. *The General Assembly shall prioritize measures that use community-scale and*  
108 *regional-scale planning, protect and enhance natural and nature-based approaches, address*  
109 *socioeconomic inequities, and enhance equity through flood resilience and preparedness.*

110 C. *The General Assembly supports and encourages flood resilience through implementation of the*  
111 *Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan and implementation of the Virginia Flood Protection Master*  
112 *Plan developed pursuant to § 10.1-602.*

113 D. *The Department shall be responsible for the implementation of the Virginia Coastal Resilience*  
114 *Plan and flood protection plan and shall serve as the lead administrator.*

115 E. *The Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan shall be updated at least every five years; shall, at a*  
116 *minimum, be a place-specific plan for mitigating severe and repetitive flooding; and shall, at a*  
117 *minimum, (i) base decision making on the best-available science; (ii) identify and address socioeconomic*  
118 *inequities and strive to enhance equity through the adaptation and protection measures by considering*  
119 *all areas of recurrent flooding; (iii) recognize the importance of protecting and enhancing natural*  
120 *infrastructure and nature-based approaches to flood mitigation, when possible; (iv) utilize community*

121 and regional scale planning to the maximum extent possible, seeking region-specific approaches tailored  
122 to the needs of individual communities; and (v) include an understanding of fiscal realities and focus on  
123 cost-effective solutions for the protection and adaptation of communities, businesses, and critical  
124 infrastructure.

125 **§ 10.1-659. Flood protection programs; coordination.**

126 A. The provisions of this chapter shall be coordinated with the Virginia Coastal Resilience Master  
127 Plan, *the Virginia Flood Protection Master Plan*, and federal, state, and local flood prevention and water  
128 quality programs to minimize loss of life, property damage, and negative impacts on the environment.  
129 This program coordination shall include but not be limited to the following: flood prevention, flood  
130 plain management, small watershed protection, dam safety, shoreline erosion and public beach  
131 preservation, and soil conservation programs of the Department of Conservation and Recreation; the  
132 construction activities of the Department of Transportation, including projects that result in hydrologic  
133 modification of rivers, streams, and flood plains; the nontidal wetlands, water quality, Chesapeake Bay  
134 Preservation Area criteria, stormwater management, erosion and sediment control, and other water  
135 management programs of the State Water Control Board; the Virginia Coastal Zone Management  
136 Program at the Department of Environmental Quality; forested watershed management programs of the  
137 Department of Forestry; the agricultural stewardship, farmland preservation, and disaster assistance  
138 programs of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; the statewide building code and  
139 other land use control programs of the Department of Housing and Community Development; the habitat  
140 management programs of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission; the hazard mitigation planning  
141 and disaster response programs of the Department of Emergency Management; the fish and wildlife  
142 habitat protection programs of the Department of Wildlife Resources; the mineral extraction regulatory  
143 program of the Department of Energy; the flood plain restrictions of the Virginia Waste Management  
144 Board; flooding-related research programs of the state universities; local government assistance programs  
145 of the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board; the Virginia Antiquities Act program of the  
146 Department of Historic Resources; *the public health and preparedness programs of the Virginia*  
147 *Department of Health; the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia; the State Corporation*  
148 *Commission;* and any other state agency programs deemed necessary by the Director, the Chief  
149 Resilience Officer of the Commonwealth, and the Special Assistant to the Governor for Coastal  
150 Adaptation and Protection. The Department shall also coordinate with soil and water conservation  
151 districts, Virginia Cooperative Extension agents, and planning district commissions, and shall coordinate  
152 and cooperate with localities in rendering assistance to such localities in their efforts to comply with the  
153 planning, subdivision of land, and zoning provisions of Chapter 22 (§ 15.2-2200 et seq.) of Title 15.2.

154 B. The Director ~~and either~~, *in coordination with* the Special Assistant to the Governor for Coastal  
155 Adaptation and Protection ~~or~~ *and* the Chief Resilience Officer, shall ~~jointly~~ hold meetings of  
156 representatives of ~~these~~ *the* programs, entities, and localities *described in subsection A at least annually*  
157 *in order to determine, coordinate, and prioritize the Commonwealth's efforts and expenditures to increase*  
158 *flooding resilience and flood preparedness and to implement the Virginia Coastal Resilience Master*  
159 *Plan and the Virginia Flood Protection Master Plan. The Department shall review any revisions to the*  
160 *Virginia Flood Protection Master Plan and provide an update on the progress of the implementation of*  
161 *the Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan at any such meetings.* The Department shall cooperate with  
162 other public and private agencies having flood plain management programs and shall coordinate its  
163 responsibilities under this article and any other law. These activities shall constitute the Commonwealth's  
164 flood resilience, preparedness, prevention, and protection program.

165 C. 1. *The Chief Resilience Officer, in coordination with the Special Assistant to the Governor for*  
166 *Coastal Adaptation and Protection and the Director, shall establish the Virginia Coastal Resilience*  
167 *Technical Advisory Committee (the Committee) to assist with developing, updating, and implementing*  
168 *the Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan.*

169 2. *The Committee shall be comprised of representatives of state agencies, coastal planning district*  
170 *commissions, regional commissions, academic advisors, and any other representatives as needed.*  
171 *Members shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor and shall include the following individuals or their*  
172 *designees: the executive directors of coastal planning district commissions and regional commissions;*  
173 *the Special Assistant to the Governor for Coastal Adaptation and Protection; the Director; the Director*  
174 *of the Virginia Department of Emergency Management; the Director of the Virginia Department of*  
175 *Housing and Community Development; the Executive Director of the Virginia Resources Authority; the*  
176 *Director of the Department of Environmental Quality; the Commissioner of the Virginia Department of*  
177 *Transportation; the Director of the Virginia Transportation Research Council; the Commissioner of the*  
178 *Virginia Marine Resources Commission; the Director of the Institute for Coastal Adaptation and*  
179 *Resilience; the Associate Dean for Research and Advisory Services at the Virginia Institute of Marine*  
180 *Science; the Director of the William and Mary School of Law Coastal Policy Center; the Director of the*  
181 *Virginia Tech Center for Coastal Studies; the Director of the Environmental Resilience Institute at the*

182 *University of Virginia; the Director of Virginia Sea Grant; the Director of Diversity, Equity, and*  
183 *Inclusion; and the Chief Data Officer of the Commonwealth. The Chief Resilience Officer shall serve as*  
184 *chairman of the Committee.*

185 *3. The Chief Resilience Officer shall invite participation by the Commander of the U.S. Army Corps*  
186 *of Engineers, Norfolk District; the Commander of the Navy Region Mid-Atlantic; and representatives of*  
187 *the seven federally recognized Tribal Nations indigenous to the Commonwealth of Virginia.*

188 *4. Appointed members shall serve in an advisory role without compensation.*

189 *5. The Committee shall meet at least quarterly.*

190 *6. The Department, the Special Assistant to the Governor for Coastal Adaptation and Protection, and*  
191 *the Coastal Zone Management Program shall provide staff support to the Committee.*

192 *7. The Committee shall ensure that (i) risk evaluations and project prioritization protocols are*  
193 *regularly updated and are informed by the best applicable scientific and technical data; (ii) statewide*  
194 *and regional needs are addressed using the best applicable science and long-term resilience*  
195 *approaches; and (iii) the Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Planning Framework is adhered to in the*  
196 *development and updating of the Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan. The Committee shall also*  
197 *review updates to the Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan and receive updates about the progress*  
198 *of the Virginia Flood Protection Master Plan at each meeting. Additionally, the Committee may be*  
199 *called upon to assist the Department with the development and updating of the Virginia Flood*  
200 *Protection Master Plan.*

201 **2. That the Special Assistant to the Governor for Coastal Adaptation and Protection, in**  
202 **coordination with the Director of the Department of Conservation and Recreation, shall update the**  
203 **Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan in accordance with § 10.1-658 of the Code of Virginia, as**  
204 **amended by this act, no later than December 31, 2024, to incorporate all major flood hazards,**  
205 **including precipitation-driven flooding; a list of all projects considered and an update of the status**  
206 **of all projects previously implemented; and a comprehensive risk assessment of critical human and**  
207 **natural infrastructure.**

208 **3. That the Director of the Department of Conservation and Recreation (the Department), jointly**  
209 **with the Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and in coordination with the Chief Resilience**  
210 **Officer and the Special Assistant to the Governor for Coastal Adaptation and Protection, shall**  
211 **prepare a Community Outreach and Engagement Plan for updates to the Virginia Coastal**  
212 **Resilience Master Plan and for development and updates to the Virginia Flood Protection Master**  
213 **Plan (the Plans) no later than December 31, 2022. The outreach and engagement plan shall strive**  
214 **for meaningful involvement by ensuring that (i) affected and vulnerable community residents have**  
215 **access and opportunity to participate in the full cycle of the decision-making process about the**  
216 **development of and updates to the Plans, and (ii) decision-makers shall seek out and consider such**  
217 **participation, allowing the views and perspectives of community residents to shape and influence**  
218 **decisions. The Department shall seek input to the Community Outreach and Engagement Plan**  
219 **from representatives of Virginia Indian tribes, community-based organizations, the public health**  
220 **sector, nongovernmental organizations, civil rights organizations, communities impacted by**  
221 **recurring flooding, and the Emergency Management Equity Working Group established pursuant**  
222 **to subdivision B 19 of § 44-146.18 of the Code of Virginia.**

223 **4. That the Director of the Department of Conservation and Recreation is authorized to use funds**  
224 **from the Community Flood Preparedness Fund, established pursuant to § 10.1-603.25 of the Code**  
225 **of Virginia, for studies of statewide or regional significance, including the development of or**  
226 **updates to the Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan, the Virginia Flood Protection Master Plan,**  
227 **and the Community Outreach and Engagement Plan described in the third enactment of this act.**

228 **5. That the Director of the Department of Conservation and Recreation shall prepare the Virginia**  
229 **Flood Protection Master Plan using a watershed-based approach no later than December 31, 2026.**