

Statement for the Record
Congressman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Select Committee on the Climate Crisis
Creating a Climate Resilient America
May 23, 2019

Thank you, Chairwoman Castor, Ranking Member Graves and members of the Select Committee on the Climate Crisis for holding this hearing on creating a climate resilient nation.

I represent the 3rd congressional district of Virginia where the Chesapeake Bay meets the James, Nansemond, and Elizabeth Rivers, which presents both challenges and opportunities. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has worked closely with our communities to ensure that they can continue to live with the water that surrounds our community.

Unfortunately, due to sea level rise, both attributable to climate change as well as historic subsidence, these waterways also pose a serious risk. Some studies estimate that sea level rise to be as much as 7 feet by the year 2100, which makes the Hampton Roads region the second largest population center at risk from sea level rise in the nation, behind only New Orleans. The City of Norfolk is specifically at risk from flooding due to high tides, nor'easters, and hurricanes. As the home of Naval Station Norfolk and numerous other federal and military facilities, this recurrent flooding also poses a severe national security risk.

State and local elected officials in Virginia already appreciate the significant threat sea level rise poses to Hampton Roads. Unfortunately, the cost to proactively and aggressively address this problem head-on is far too great for any city to bear by itself. While Norfolk has already spent considerable sums of money to study its recurrent flooding issues and implement resilient infrastructure where feasible, the scope of the entire project to actually address the problem is expected to total in the billions of dollars.

As this committee considers ways to make our nation more resilient, I urge you to make flood mitigation a priority. I encourage you to look at the Building Up Infrastructure and Limiting Disasters through Resilience (BUILD Resilience) Act, legislation that I introduced last Congress with Senators Mark Warner and Tim Kaine and that I intend to introduce again soon. The BUILD Resilience Act would establish a competitive grant program for resilient infrastructure investment to bolster the ability of regions, such as Hampton Roads and New Orleans, to implement projects and strategies to reduce regional vulnerability to threats like sea level rise and recurrent flooding. Analyses by the Congressional Budget Office and the Multi-hazard Mitigation Council of the National Institute of Building Sciences estimate that every \$1 invested in resilient infrastructure upfront saves \$3 to \$4 in future losses on the back-end after a major disaster strikes. Investing upfront in resilient solutions can potentially help save taxpayers and impacted communities billions of dollars in avoided costs.

Madam Chairwoman, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share my concerns creating a climate resilient America with the select committee.