

**Hearing Statement of Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton  
for the District of Columbia Flood Prevention Act of 2019  
July 25, 2019**

Thank you Chairman Huffman for holding a hearing on the District of Columbia Flood Prevention Act of 2019.

The bill would amend the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (CZMA) to include the nation's capital in the definition of "coastal state." Our bill would correct an apparent oversight in the omission of the District of Columbia and would make the District eligible to receive federal funding and provide oversight for federally issued permits, facilities and actions that affect the coastal waters of the District. The District urgently needs the protection of the CZMA because of serious flood risks that currently affect federal assets, residents and businesses, including the National Mall and the cluster of downtown federal agencies.

In an effort to reduce coastal flood risk, Congress has authorized a number of programs to help states and territories respond to floods and mitigate risk through resiliency projects. Among these programs, the CZMA provides planning and technical services to assist states in protecting, restoring and developing coastal communities and resources. Once the federal government approves a state's coastal management plan, the state becomes eligible for grants. Federal actions must be consistent with the state plans and vice versa.

Even though the District is located on two rivers and has suffered substantial coastal floods in the past, D.C. was omitted from the list of eligible states and territories in the CZMA. This oversight probably occurred because the CZMA was passed in 1972 – before the District achieved home rule. Of note, under Section 304 of the CZMA, "coastal state[s]" include the states and U.S. territories (Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands and American Samoa). Absent from this definition is the District, even though the District, including the federal complex, is under a serious threat from rising sea levels. Because territories are included in the definition of "coastal states," it appears that D.C.'s omission is a mistake, which only Congress can correct.

Scientists have predicted that the tides on the Atlantic Coast could rise two to four feet by the year 2100, causing property worth as much as \$7 billion in the District to be routinely under threat by floodwaters. This damage not only includes private homes and businesses, but the National Mall, federal buildings and three military bases located in the District. The Anacostia and Potomac Rivers are both tidally influenced, showing tangible salt water effects (and fish), and are part of an "intertidal-zone" existing between high and low maritime tides. In addition, the Maryland and Virginia coastal zones each include the tidal Potomac River, with Maryland's zone ending at the District line. Because of these factors, the District should be eligible under the CZMA just like the states and territories already listed in the CZMA.

I would also like to submit two letters of support for this legislation for the record. The first is from Mayor Muriel Bowser and the second is from the DC Council, joined by local business owners, as well as local and national environmental groups.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support this legislation.