



**Remarks of Chris Cook, Chief of Environment, Energy and Open Space
Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture
May 14, 2019**

As prepared for delivery

My name is Chris Cook and I am the Chief of Environment, Energy, and Open Space for the City of Boston. I want to thank Chair Gobi and Chair Pignatelli and the entire Committee for holding this hearing.

I am here on behalf of Mayor Martin J. Walsh to testify in strong support of H.825 and S.433 and I want to thank Senator Brownsberger and Representative Madaro for sponsoring this important piece of legislation.

These bills, which we call "Climate Ready Commonwealth", would create a statewide commission to determine which entity should lead major coastal and inland resiliency project, how such projects might be funded, and how those projects should be prioritized.

Boston is not alone in facing the threat of climate change.

Communities throughout the Commonwealth are experiencing the reality of extreme heat, snow, rain, and flooding. As the impacts increase and intensify, it is more important now than ever before to coordinate investments to adapt infrastructure and our natural and built environment to future climate conditions.

One example is Moakley Park, a low-lying, 60-acre waterfront park in South Boston. Recently the City of Boston created a vision plan for the future of the park to protect it and several Boston neighborhoods from future flood events.

The project requires coordination across nearly half a dozen local and state agencies including Boston Parks and Recreation, Boston Housing Authority, the Department for Conservation and Recreation, the University of Massachusetts Boston, and the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority to identify resiliency measures in a cohesive design.

As implementation of the design begins, these stakeholders will need to continue to work together to align plans and investments.

The City will soon complete a resilience plan for each coastal neighborhood in Boston, offering solutions to protect residents, businesses, critical infrastructure, and community landmarks. Throughout planning these projects, it was clear that district-level solutions at an even larger scale are needed to combat the growing threat of climate change.

Record snowstorms, more frequent flooding, hotter summers – climate impacts are here with more to come in the future, placing people, our economy, and critical services at risk.

We do our best to coordinate with all impacted partners, but as the projects get larger in scale and more complicated, collectively we are going to need a more formalized governance structure and mechanism by which to prioritize and carry out these capital projects.

Boston is a leader on climate resilience, putting forth plans and actions before the next big storm. Mayor Walsh is actively creating Resilient Boston Harbor, a vision plan to protect and enhance Boston's 47-mile shoreline from coastal flooding through new and revitalized open space.

Many other communities are creating their own plans, as well. But Boston cannot create a resilient future in isolation, nor can any single community. As the impacts of climate change worsen, it will become more necessary for governance beyond the local level.

The State already demonstrates strong leadership in supporting climate-ready communities and this proposed commission will build on that. I ask that you favorably report out these bills and I am happy to answer any questions.