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### COMPETITIVE DIVISION – GRADUATE STUDENT

#### A Review and Comparative Analysis of Preparedness in Prince George's County, Maryland

With a poverty rate of 27.9% prior to Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans had one of the highest concentrations of poverty in the country, and due to this, “the difference in resilience between the city's poor and wealthy communities was evident in every stage of the disaster” (MDC Inc., 2017). Events leading up to, during, and after Hurricane Katrina were not anomalies and can be seen with many other disasters around the world, where those who are low-income minorities are disproportionately affected by disasters. So many low-income families live in areas where the land is the cheapest but are also more prone to natural disasters, such as floodplains. These families also lack adequate resources needed for them to prepare for and recover from disasters, such as a car or a place to stay if they must evacuate and leave their homes (MDC Inc., 2017).

Despite a substantial push towards increased preparedness after 9/11, in 2015 only 50% of people said their family had a family emergency preparedness plan. Of that 50%, only 68% had adequate plans and the recommended items in their preparedness kits. Additionally, of that 50% with emergency preparedness plans, it was found that those living in the Western

parts of the United States were more likely to have a family emergency preparedness plan that all members knew about (NCDP, 2016). As natural disasters become more common, where there was an average of 5.4 disasters a year in the 2000s and increased to an average of 10.5 in the last decade (Zagorsky, 2017).

Since the year 2000, the State of Maryland has had just under 20 federal disaster declarations. Prince George's County had 12 disaster declarations, where the majority were attributed to hurricanes and snowstorms (FEMA, 2021). As instances of natural disasters continue to increase, it is more important than ever to ensure that citizens are prepared for natural disasters.

**Presentation Theme:** A review and comparative analysis of preparedness in Prince George's County, Maryland

**Collaborators, Advisor(s) and Department(s) that assisted with this research:** Darrell Small and Ronald E. Gill Jr., of Prince George's County Office of Homeland Security/Office of Emergency Management; Dr. Lucy Wilson, UMBC, Graduate Advisor