



Maryland Emergency Management Association

c/o Montgomery County Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security
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www.marylandema.org

Joseph Theobald, *President* Michelle Lloyd, *Vice President* Shelly Gooding, *Secretary* Marianne Souders, *Treasurer*

January 31, 2020

State of Maryland House of Delegates Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241
House of Delegates Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Madam Chair Pendegrass and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

I am writing a letter of support for HB648, Definitions and Authorities, on behalf of the Maryland Emergency Management Association. This bill provides needed updates to Maryland's Title 14, which in turn, will enable more efficient response to disasters and also prioritize risk reduction efforts through the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA).

The Maryland Emergency Management Association promotes and supports an all-hazards approach to Emergency Management in the State of Maryland. Originally formed in 1986 as the Maryland Emergency Management and Civil Defense Association, the organization was formed to promote and support adequate Emergency Management and Civil Defense in the State of Maryland; coordinate the efforts of all members in a common front to protect the lives and property of all persons within the State against natural or man-made disasters or enemy action; to evaluate and disseminate the common experience and collective judgment of those specialists trained in and responsible for Emergency Management and Civil Defense activities; serve as a clearing house for ideas, suggestions and courses of action between members; and to act in concert with and in a professional advisory capacity to other organizations regarding Emergency Management and Civil Defense. Today the organization, with almost 100 members, continues to promote Emergency Management efforts across the State of Maryland. The Association welcomes local Emergency Management staff as well as Professional/Technical and Corporate Memberships. We encourage continued involvement from our retired members offering them lifetime membership and participation in Association activities.

House Bill 648 updates Maryland's Title 14, the enabling law that assigns authority to MEMA to coordinate disaster response. While Title 14 is the foundation for emergency management in Maryland, the law is dated and does not reflect realities of emergency management in 2020. Threats and hazards are changing and communities are subjected to more frequent disasters. To meet the demand of modern issues MEMA must be enabled to coordinate effectively to support the needs of locals. We believe this legislation achieves that outcome.

In addition to updates to consequence management policy, HB648 addresses the role of emergency management to coordinate disaster risk reduction. In order to stem the tide in disaster losses emergency management agencies, coupled with community partners, must partner to

reduce disaster impacts. This bill elevates the importance of disaster risk reduction while updating existing law.

To reiterate, the Maryland Emergency Management Association fully supports House Bill 648. This bill is an important step in updating existing laws governing emergency management activities. The bill enables future growth and partnerships across the Maryland Emergency Management System.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Theobald', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Joseph Theobald
President, Maryland Emergency Management Association