

City of Annapolis
Mayor Gavin Buckley
160 Duke of Gloucester St
Annapolis, MD 21401



Office of Emergency Management
Director Kevin J. Simmons
199 Taylor Ave
Annapolis, MD 21401

In Support of MD 2022 HB 386
Small, Minority, and Women-Owned Businesses Account - Local State of Emergency

Ways and Means Committee Hearing
Wednesday, February 9, 2022 - 1:00pm

Chair Atterbeary, Vice-Chair Washington, and fellow members of the Ways and Means Committee:

I am Kevin J Simmons, Director of the Office of Emergency Management for the City of Annapolis. I offer this testimony to you today to voice my support for HB 386, a bill that provides local governments such as the City of Annapolis with the capacity to make available emergency grant funding to small businesses and non-profit organizations impacted by natural disasters.

This Bill fills a critical gap in local disaster recovery efforts in which local governments can access disaster relief funding for its small, minority and women-owned businesses (SMWOB) and non-profit organizations affected by a natural disaster that may not receive a State or Federal Declaration of Emergency.

This past fall, the City of Annapolis sustained substantial damage from two large natural disasters. These include an unprecedented category EF-2 tornado on September 1, 2021, in which over 100 homes and businesses within Annapolis were damaged or completely destroyed, and the fourth highest recorded coastal flooding in Annapolis on October 29, 2021, in which downtown small businesses and non-profit organizations suffered significant property damage.

Although both of these natural disasters caused significant damage and required emergency relief funding, the ability of the City of Annapolis and Anne Arundel County to provide essential relief in the form of grants differed, and non-profit organizations were excluded from the relief.

In response to the October flooding, Governor Hogan declared a State of Emergency which allowed for Anne Arundel County Executive Steuart Pittman to announce that the Anne Arundel Economic Development Corporation would immediately begin accepting applications for grants of up to \$50,000 for small businesses impacted by the flooding. Due to this process, the City of Annapolis' small businesses were quickly able to access the financial assistance needed to recover and resume normal operations. Non-profit organizations, however, were deemed ineligible for the grant funds due to the existing legislation and organizations such as the Annapolis Maritime Museum were unable to seek assistance in recovering the more than \$151,000 in flood damage caused to their facility.

Following earlier devastation from the EF-2 tornado in September, the Governor did not declare a State of Emergency and the State did not receive a presidential disaster declaration. In the absence of these declarations, the local governments were only able to rely on their local disaster declaration which does not currently allow access to grant funding provided by local SMWOB fund managers. Had HB 386 been in effect at the time of this disaster, many of the impacted businesses, community centers, and churches, which some are still not reopened as of today, would have been able to apply for grants up to \$50,000 in order to begin their recovery and rebuilding.

I respectfully request that the Ways and Means Committee look favorably upon this legislation to allow local governments like the City of Annapolis to act quickly and provide essential relief to small business and non-profit organizations following a local emergency.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Kevin J. Simmons", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kevin J Simmons
Director