



March 9, 2023

House Bill 789

Public Safety - State Disaster Recovery Fund

House Appropriations Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

Anne Arundel County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 789 - Public Safety - State Disaster Recovery Fund. This bill will establish the State Disaster Recovery Fund to provide disaster related assistance to fill gaps when federal assistance is unavailable. This bill is the result of legislation passed last year to create the Workgroup to Study the Establishment of a State Disaster Relief Fund, which was co-chaired by Anne Arundel County's Director of Emergency Management.

On September 1, 2021, Tropical Depression Ida hit Anne Arundel County and significantly impacted over one hundred homes and twenty-five businesses. Multiple commercial properties were destroyed, and business owners returned to their properties to find collapsed walls and roofs. We declared a local state of emergency in Anne Arundel County the next day, September 2, 2021, to allow us to deploy the resources our communities needed.

The State of Maryland worked with us to help ensure our residents and businesses could recover from this storm, and we worked together to submit a major disaster declaration for the State of Maryland through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). However, on October 8, 2021, over a month after we had declared a local state of emergency, FEMA denied the requested major disaster declaration for the State of Maryland.

With this denial, Anne Arundel County could only look to the State to provide the financial relief our residents and businesses needed to recover from the storm damages. We sent a letter requesting assistance through the VLT Fund's Small, Minority, and Women-Owned Business Account and the Department of Housing and Community Development's disaster relief programs. While the State made \$4 million in funding available through the Department of Housing and Community Development, without a State or Federal declaration the businesses could not benefit from the VLT fund to make repairs and prevent further economic loss.

HB789 would ensure that there is a clear process for local governments to access grant funding once a local state of emergency is declared, preventing a delay like this from happening again, and ensuring that our residents and businesses have the funding they need to recover from an emergency as soon as possible.

For all of these reasons, I respectfully request a **FAVORABLE** report on House Bill 789.

Stuart Pittman
County Executive