



Maryland Emergency Management Association

c/o Montgomery County Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security
100 Edison Park Drive, 1S31, Gaithersburg, MD 20878
www.marylandema.org

Joseph Theobald, *President* Jo Henderson, *Vice President* Shelly Gooding, *Secretary* Marianne Souders, *Treasurer*

March 30, 2023

Re: SUPPORT – SB0650 as Amended – State Disaster Recovery Fund

The Maryland Emergency Management Association (MDEMA) is a non-profit organization that brings together emergency management professionals from across Maryland to improve the state's emergency preparedness and response capabilities. MDEMA serves as a forum for emergency managers to share best practices, discuss emerging issues and trends, and collaborate on planning and response efforts.

The Maryland Emergency Management Association strongly supports Maryland SB0650 in its amended form. SB0650 would establish the State Disaster Recovery Fund to provide disaster-related assistance to local governments, individuals, families, and businesses in the event of a disaster. The creation of such a fund was the result of careful study and consideration by the State Disaster Relief Fund Working Group commissioned over the Summer of 2022.

The establishment of a Maryland State Disaster Recovery Fund will provide a critical source of support for Maryland communities. In the absence or denial of federal declaration and assistance, the State Disaster Recovery Fund will be able to provide assistance for the unmet needs of individuals and families in a ***timely manner***. The fund will enable the state to provide disaster-related assistance to local governments for the repair or replacement of public facilities, as well as low-interest or no-interest loans to businesses and nonprofits. This support is essential for these entities to ***respond to disasters, resume normal operations, expedite recovery efforts, and mitigate the long-term impacts of disasters quickly and effectively.***

By creating this fund, ***Maryland will become one of many other jurisdictions that have identified this disaster response gap*** and proactively chose to act on it, such as California's Disaster Assistance Act, Texas' Disaster Relief Fund, New York State Disaster Relief Fund, Virginia Disaster Relief Fund, and Florida's Disaster Fund. These are just a few examples of jurisdictions that have disaster relief funds. Many other states and local governments also have similar funds in place to help those affected by disasters and emergencies.

While Maryland has received federal disaster aid for several major disasters in the past, there have been ***instances where federal funds were not available***, such as the Ellicott City Floods in



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2016 and 2018¹, Baltimore Gas Explosion in 2020²; Hail Storm in Frederick in 2020³. These incidents highlight the need for Maryland to have a state disaster relief fund in place that can help provide the financial assistance to individuals and communities when Federal funding is not available.

Finally, we support the establishment of a State Disaster Recovery Fund over the utilization of the Catastrophic Event Account (CEA) as proposed in the amended version of HB789.

Unfortunately, the use of the CEA as an alternative funding source does not adequately meet the needs of Maryland's residents as identified by the State Disaster Relief Fund Working Group in its report to the Maryland General Assembly. The use of the CEA for the relief effort specified above is likely to result in inefficient, delayed, or inconsistent application of disaster relief funding and delivery across the State.

Disaster assistance plays a critical role in promoting recovery, addressing immediate needs, and mitigating the long-term impacts of disasters. It is an essential component of disaster relief efforts and can help promote the rapid recovery of life, economy, and the environment.

We respectfully request a **favorable report on SB 0650.**

Netta Squires and Jon Bratt

Co-Chairs MDEMA Legislative Committee

On behalf of the Maryland Emergency Management Association

¹ Ellicott City, Maryland, experienced severe flash floods in 2016 and 2018 that caused significant damage to businesses and homes. While the state of Maryland provided financial assistance to those affected, a federal disaster declaration was not issued, and federal funds were not available.

² In August 2020, a gas explosion occurred in Baltimore that destroyed several homes and damaged others. While the state of Maryland provided financial assistance to those affected, a federal disaster declaration was not issued, and federal funds were not available.

³ In June 2020, a severe hail storm hit Frederick, Maryland, causing significant damage to homes, cars, and businesses. While the state of Maryland provided financial assistance to those affected, a federal disaster declaration was not issued, and federal funds were not available.