



Alderwoman Rhonda Pindell Charles

City of Annapolis Ward 3

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**In Support of MD 2023 SB 650
Public Safety - State Disaster Recovery Fund**

*Senate Budget and Taxation Committee Hearing
Thursday, March 9, 2023*

Chair Guzzone, Vice-Chair Rosapepe, and fellow members of the Budget and Taxation Committee:

I, Rhonda Pindell Charles, Alderperson for the City of Annapolis Ward 3 and Chairperson of the City Council Public Safety Committee, write in support of Senate Bill 650 - State Disaster Recovery Fund. This bill establishes a disaster recovery fund that fills a critical gap in state disaster recovery funding that can be made available to local governments, including the City of Annapolis, when a disaster strikes within its community.

In September of 2021, members of my community in Ward 3 were severely impacted by an unprecedented category EF-2 tornado that struck Annapolis in the neighborhood of Parole. The devastation caused by this natural disaster included substantial structural damage to area properties resulting in the complete loss of homes and businesses for many of my constituents. A local state of emergency was declared by Mayor Gavin Buckley, however, without the declaration of a state emergency or federal disaster declaration, many of Ward 3's most vulnerable and underserved populations are going without the necessary resources to recover from the storm.

Within this historic Black and Brown community, many of the impacted residents are seniors living on a fixed income or are families living in generational homes and are living at or below the poverty level. Many of these homes are uninsured or underinsured as a result. These individuals and families have faced significant obstacles and delays in accessing the current programs offered at the State level in the aftermath of this disaster. The community has voiced their concerns that there is much needed improvement in how recovery assistance is provided to communities like Parole after such a disaster occurs. Community members have shared their stories and provided testimony of their lived experience with the recovery process to members of the State Disaster Relief Fund Working Group and I support them in their calls for needed improvements.

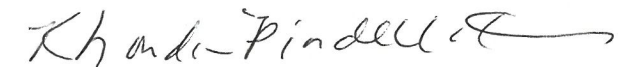
I continue to work closely with the residents, businesses, churches and community centers within Parole that were impacted by this disaster and who are still struggling to obtain the necessary recovery assistance in the absence of a federal declaration. This Fund would allow the State the ability to provide disaster recovery assistance to these families and community members, as well as provide financial assistance to the local government when federal recovery assistance is not made fully available.

Localized disasters like the Annapolis tornado are continuing to grow in frequency and magnitude throughout the State of Maryland. The programs and resources administered by federal, state, and local emergency management departments are more vital to local communities than ever before.

This Fund provides the necessary mechanism for the State to direct recovery funds to the residents, families, businesses, and nonprofit organizations that need it most after all local resources have been exhausted.

I strongly urge this committee to offer a favorable recommendation in support of the establishment of the State Disaster Recovery Fund.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rhonda Pindell Charles". The signature is written in black ink and includes a long, sweeping flourish at the end.

Rhonda Pindell Charles, J.D.
Aldersperson Ward 3
City of Annapolis