



## **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](http://www.marylandema.org)

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

March 8, 2023

### **Re: SUPPORT – SB0650 – 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,*** which 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.

Disasters, whether natural or man-made, can have severe consequences on people's lives and livelihoods. These events can result in loss of life, displacement, injury, property damage, and economic disruption. The consequences can be even more devastating for individuals and communities who lack the financial resources to cope with the aftermath of a disaster. In such cases, disaster relief funds can provide critical support to affected individuals and communities.

The establishment of the 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***.

Moreover, individual assistance funds can help ***mitigate the economic impacts of disasters***. Disasters can lead to job loss and business closures, which can have long-term consequences for affected individuals and communities. By providing financial assistance to individuals and families, individual assistance funds can help them recover and contribute to the local economy.

Further, the Fund ***promotes equity and fairness*** and embodies the Emergency Management and Maryland values of ***leaving no citizen behind*** and ***caring for our most vulnerable***. Disasters disproportionately affect low-income individuals and communities, who may lack the resources to cope with the aftermath of a disaster. The establishment of the State Disaster Recovery Fund is an important step in ***ensuring the resilience of all Maryland communities*** in the face of disasters.



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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 many ***instances where federal funds were not available***, such as the Ellicott City Floods in 2016 and 2018<sup>1</sup>, Baltimore Gas Explosion in 2020<sup>2</sup>; Hail Storm in Frederick in 2020<sup>3</sup>. In these instances, the state of Maryland used its own resources to provide assistance to those affected by disasters. However, many individual needs remained unmet given and delayed. Having a state disaster relief fund in place can help provide the financial assistance to individuals and communities, at the time they are most needed.

Overall, individual assistance funds are critical in promoting recovery, addressing immediate needs, and mitigating the long-term economic impacts of disasters. They are an essential component of disaster relief efforts and can help promote equity and fairness in disaster response.

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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.