

February 7, 2024

**Testimony on Senate Bill 459**  
**Grant Applications and Reporting - Maryland Efficient Grant Application Council -**  
**Alterations**  
**Senate Budget and Taxation Committee**

**Position: Favorable**

On behalf of Apra Maryland, the organization representing Maryland-area fundraising professionals dedicated to leveraging information and data to drive philanthropy, we support Senate Bill 459, which extends the vital work of the Maryland Efficient Grant Application Council.

The Maryland Efficient Grant Application Council plays a crucial role in informing the streamlining and improving the grant application process in our state. It studies uniform grant application forms, financial controls, and reporting requirements, ultimately reducing barriers and enhancing accountability in grant management. This, in turn, benefits both nonprofit organizations and government agencies, making it easier for them to navigate the grant-making process efficiently and effectively.

In the 2023 Regular Session, we made tremendous progress with SB112/HB328, approved by the governor, requiring the prompt payment of state grants. This legislation was a significant step forward in ensuring that nonprofits receive timely disbursements, alleviating financial burdens we often face. SB459 builds upon this progress by extending the Maryland Efficient Grant Application Council's work and further enhancing the efficiency of state grant administration.

The Council was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and a lack of staff support during the previous administration. Senate Bill 459 proposes several changes to the existing law related to the Council, with the most notable being the extension of the Council's termination date until at least 2028, a more realistic timeframe for completing its essential work.

Additionally, SB459 charges the Council with studying and making recommendations on the creation of a state grants ombudsperson, which will provide technical assistance to grant applicants, helping nonprofits access and navigate state grant programs, resolve delays in the grant-making process, and collect and disseminate information on grant opportunities. The creation of this ombudsperson will expedite problem resolution and improve the overall efficiency of grant administration.

We hope that the Moore-Miller administration will ensure adequate staffing for the Council, recognizing the vital role it plays in improving the grant application process in our state.

We urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 459 to continue the work of the Maryland Efficient Grant Application Council and ensure that, with the support of state government, Maryland's nonprofits positively impact the lives of Marylanders every day.