



Senate Bill 640

Emergency Community Service Funds

Position: Support

Dear Members of Budget and Tax Committee:

My name is Carmen Del Guercio, CEO and President of the Maryland Food Bank.

I am writing on behalf of the Emergency Community Service Funds sponsored by Senator Elfreth which provides emergency funds to local nonprofits in our state.

A lack of funding in the early days of the pandemic slowed our ability to respond to the sudden and dramatic increase in need for food assistance across Maryland.

Typically, emergency feeding efforts stand up after short-term emergencies like hurricanes, and last less than a week. And the cost of those feeding operations is covered by the nonprofits that specialize in disaster response work, like the Red Cross or the Salvation Army.

When COVID-19 hit, at the Maryland Food Bank analysis showed that we needed to double our food distribution operations for the foreseeable future. Our initial forecast showed that the cost for 90 days of that level of work would be \$12M over and above normal operating expenses.

We began purchasing food on the belief that funding would soon follow. But this is not a model that we should replicate. There is no guarantee that in future emergencies, nonprofit providers will be able or willing to respond at the level required without the guarantee of financial support.

Having dedicated funding ready to deploy immediately to keep critical social service supports flowing during an emergency is a commonsense measure that protects Marylanders during chaotic, and vulnerable events... and ensures that the organizations that are best positioned to provide immediate solutions are able to do so.

The Maryland Food Bank stands behind this bill and we urge the Committee to adopt a favorable report of Senate Bill 640.