



**TO: Senate Budget & Taxation Committee**

**FROM: Maryland Multi-Housing Association**

**SUBJECT: Senate Bill 640 – Emergency Community Services Fund**

**DATE: February 17, 2021**

**POSITION: Favorable**

This testimony is offered on behalf of Maryland Multi-Housing Association (MMHA). We are a professional trade association established in 1996, whose members consists of owners and managers of more than 210,000 rental housing homes in over 958 apartment communities. Our members house over 556,000 residents of the State of Maryland and we have 250 associate member companies who supply goods and services to the multi-housing industry.

Senate Bill 640 establishes the Emergency Community Services Fund to enable the State to quickly respond to an increased demand for community services during a state of emergency or during a period of increased unemployment. The bill requires the Governor to appropriate \$10,000,000 to the Fund and allows the Governor to transfer funds to the appropriate executive agency to fund food and nutritional programs, rental assistance and services for residential tenants, and energy assistance programs.

As housing providers, our members witness firsthand the financial hardships that COVID-19 has exacerbated for our low-income residents, many who were already struggling to make ends meet prior to the pandemic. Throughout the pandemic we surveyed our members on delinquency rates. MMHA members have consistently reported that an average of 1/3 of renters in C Class properties are delinquent monthly. This pandemic demonstrates that current federal funding for community services and assistance programs is inconsistent, unpredictable, and clearly insufficient. Senate Bill 640 would ensure that Maryland will be better positioned to provide resources and services for residents struggling financially during the next emergency or period of prolonged unemployment.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a favorable report from the Committee on SB 640.

**For more information, please contact Jessie Keller at 410.413.1420**