

SENATOR SARAH ELFRETH
Legislative District 30
Anne Arundel County

Budget and Taxation Committee

Subcommittees

Education, Business and Administration

Chair, Pensions

Senate Chair

Joint Committee on Administrative,
Executive, and Legislative Review

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 103
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3578 · 301-858-3578
800-492-7122 Ext. 3578
Fax 410-841-3156 · 301-858-3156
Sarah.Elfreth@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 17, 2021

Testimony in Favor of SB0640
Emergency Community Services Fund

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

I respectfully request a favorable report of Senate Bill 640. This timely legislation will create an “Emergency Community Services Fund” of \$10,000,000 to be authorized for use by the Legislative Policy Committee in circumstances of economic downturn and/or in a State of Emergency. The fund would be used to respond without undue delay and provide nimble and necessary funding for food and nutrition assistance, rental and housing assistance, and energy assistance during a prolonged State of Emergency or during prolonged periods of high unemployment.

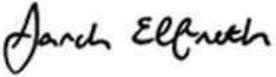
As we all have seen throughout the course of the COVID-19 pandemic and our current 11-month long State of Emergency, Marylanders are struggling - they are struggling to pay rent, put food on the table, and keep the lights on. With that in mind though, I am proud that all levels of government stepped up in many different ways to support Marylanders in these difficult times. At a Federal, State, and Local level we have shown that during times like these we can and should use creative policy and budgetary solutions to provide for our most vulnerable neighbors. This legislation will be another tool in addressing the needs of Marylanders that arise during troubling times.

This Committee just last week provided record support to targeted communities that have suffered the most from this pandemic. While the RELIEF Act will provide critical support in the coming months, this pandemic has shown that we need a proactive tool with which to get critical relief to neighbors in need from the outset of a State of Emergency.

As the people’s body, representative of each distinct corner of this State, we hear directly from our constituents and see firsthand where the greatest needs arise. Yet, our hands are tied when there is an emergency and we are not in legislative session, placing the sole decision-making on where and when to distribute relief to the executive branch. Through the creation of the Emergency Community Services Fund, we would create the opportunity and ability to provide targeted and direct relief in a timely manner to our communities.

Too many of our neighbors and constituents are struggling to keep roofs over their heads and food on the table. Government needs to be more nimble in times of crisis to stand up for those who have the least. I respectfully request a favorable report of Senate Bill 640 to ensure that there is another tool in our tool box in providing targeted, direct relief to Marylanders in a timely and properly communicated manner.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Elfreth". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sarah Elfreth