

TO: The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
The Honorable Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair
Members, Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
The Honorable Michael A. Jackson
The Honorable Clarence K. Lam
The Honorable Edward R. Reilly

RE: **FAVORABLE** – Senate Bill 68 & Senate Bill 658

Date: February 15th, 2021

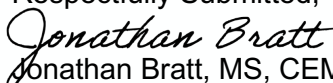
The University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) supports both Senate Bills 68 and 658. Both bills enhance Maryland's ability to create a more prepared and resilient higher education community by creating a cabinet-level state emergency management department more capable of leading and directing statewide emergency preparedness and response efforts.

Emergency management is a multidisciplinary, coordinated, and collaborative endeavor to overcome some of our most complex challenges. Solving these problems requires vast resources, the flexibility to adapt to ever-changing environments, and the ability to implement innovative solutions. While the Maryland Department of the military has served as an excellent incubator for our emergency management system, the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) needs to become a separate, cabinet-level entity, to maximally and efficiently fulfill its charge.

In its current form, MEMA is accountable for Maryland's resiliency and preparedness efforts but is significantly limited in its ability and authority. Senate Bills 68 and 658 remedies these limitations by elevating the organization and its leadership to a position of both stature and access. The proposed changes enhance the existing emergency management organization by creating a state emergency management function that is a recognized leader, removes unneeded layers of bureaucracy, and can directly advise its partner emergency management organizations and leadership within state government. By enacting either Senate Bills 68 or 658, Maryland will also join the ranks of at least 15 other states who have likewise elevated their emergency management organization to a cabinet-level department that reports directly to the Governor.

As UMB works to build its own emergency management department, we look forward to partnering with a newly enhanced state emergency management agency that can effectively lead disaster preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation initiatives across the state. Accordingly, UMB urges a **FAVORABLE** report for both Senate bills 68 and 658.

Respectfully Submitted,


Jonathan Bratt, MS, CEM, NRP