

COURTNEY WATSON
Legislative District 9B
Howard County

Economic Matters Committee

Subcommittees

Banking, Consumer Protection,
and Commercial Law

Property and Casualty Insurance

Vice Chair, Democratic Caucus



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 28, 2022

HB 1312 Public Safety - Resilient Maryland Revolving Loan Fund - Alterations

SPONSOR: Delegate Courtney Watson

POSITION: Favorable with Amendments

Good afternoon Chairman Guzzone, Vice Chairman Rosapepe, and members of the committee. Thank you for allowing me to present House Bill 1312. This bill passed the Environment and Transportation Committee 23-0, and passed the House 132-0 with amendments.

Last year, Maryland became a national leader by establishing the Resilient Revolving Loan Fund. We were ahead of our time, however, and have been waiting for the federal government to promulgate regulations. Therefore, this year I am here with a few small changes, aligned with federal developments, to ensure that it is set up and operational as quickly as possible.

House Bill 1312 makes the following small changes to the already established Resilient Revolving Loan Fund:

- 1) Following the passage of the national *Safeguarding Tomorrow Through Ongoing Risk Mitigation* (STORM) Act, the financial industry has expressed interest in loaning hundreds of billions of dollars to increase available funds for retro-fitting buildings against natural hazards. HB 1312 will allow Maryland to leverage these private dollars by establishing a new restricted fund within the original loan program, specifically for private capital directed towards the retro-fitting of buildings.
- 2) Secondly, while the Revolving Loan Fund provides low to no-interest loans, payments may still be out of reach for many of our low-income families in

Maryland. Therefore, HB 1312 adds a provision to allow for loan forgiveness under certain circumstances.

3) Finally, the bill makes administration of the fund an eligible cost so that Maryland Department of Emergency Management can hire its administrative staff. Under the wisdom and foresight of this committee, a position was originally added to the Department of Emergency Management in order to manage the fund; however, since administration of the fund was not included as an eligible usage of the fund, they were unable to hire for the position.

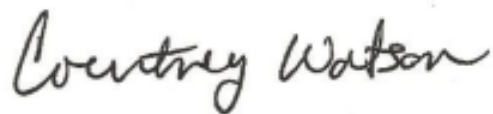
The bill was amended as a result of discussions with MACoto to specify that the loans from the fund may be made directly to local governing bodies, “at their request.” With these changes, Maryland can double down on its investment, use state funds to leverage private funds, and bring the nation’s first resilient loan fund into better alignment with the federal regulations.

With this bill we can make the first resilient loan fund in the United States even better. For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 1312.

In the House, written and oral testimony was offered in support by Mr. Roderick Scott, a Flood Hazard Mitigation Specialist and Technical Education Provider at L & R Resources, LLC. There should be a letter of support from Mr. Scott in your materials.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Courtney Watson".

Delegate Courtney Watson
Howard County District 9B