



MARYLAND
Association of
COUNTIES

COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGERS AFFILIATE

LETTER IN SUPPORT OF SB 48 WITH AMENDMENTS

DISASTER SERVICE AND UNIFORMED SERVICES LEAVE MODERNIZATION ACT OF 2023

FINANCE COMMITTEE

JANUARY 31, 2023

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) Emergency Managers Affiliate **SUPPORTS SB 48 WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill adds certain State employees to provisions of law authorizing disaster service leave with pay, including emergency managers, first responders, and Incident Management Teams (IMTs). Additionally, SB 48 would authorize certain appointing authorities to waive certain requirements for disaster service leave and to increase the number of days of disaster service leave if “in the best interest of the State.” As it is proposed, SB 48 will only apply to State employees, and will not impact local employees or the private sector.

The bill seeks to accomplish three primary objectives:

The first objective is to expand the availability of disaster service leave to include organizations beyond the Red Cross, including Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOADs), Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COADs), Community Emergency Response Team (CERTs), and local volunteer fire/EMS organizations, among others. Current Maryland law only permits five (5) days of paid disaster service leave for service within the Red Cross for specific disaster operations. Expansion of paid disaster service leave would be incredibly beneficial to county and local jurisdictions that rely on surges of volunteer support during disaster preparedness, response, and recovery operations.

The second objective is to expand the definition of Federal service leave beyond the traditional Armed Services to include the entire "Federal Uniformed Services," including the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps (NOAA Corps), the National Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) Response System (the System), and the new Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Disaster Reserve Corps.

The third objective of SB 48 is to establish the definition of an "Emergency Manager." This change is administrative in nature with no operational or legal ramifications. This change would allow for easier inclusion of Emergency Management (EM) professionals in future bills.

MACo Emergency Managers Affiliate has identified the need for two amendments. The first amendment is to correct the current language in the bill as it relates to emergency managers. The current language of "Local Emergency Manager" would be changed to "Emergency Manager." The second amendment would list out each individual Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) rather than placing them subordinate to Maryland VOAD as proposed in the current draft of the bill.

This bill seeks to align Maryland law with current Federal law on these matters. Accordingly, MACo Emergency Managers Affiliate urges the Committee to give SB 48 a report of **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS.**