



Emergency Management Officials Department Maryland Municipal League

Honorable Members of the House of Delegates,

I am writing on behalf of the Emergency Management Officials Department (EMOD) of the Maryland Municipal League (MML) in support of HB 865. This legislation is needed to strengthen the State Disaster Recovery Fund (SDRF). The SDRF is crucial for Marylanders because it provides immediate financial support to communities affected by disasters when Federal assistance is not available.

The SDRF was created by legislation adopted in 2023. This fund was created as a source of disaster relief for local governments, as the fund assists individual residents and businesses to recover when federal or other sources of funds are not authorized. Of the past 17 disasters in Maryland, 8 did not receive a Federal disaster declaration, or Federal emergency relief funding. In almost half of local disasters, Maryland Counties, Cities and Towns must be able to take care of the citizenry so that none of our residents are left behind, especially our most vulnerable citizens. In FY25 the SDRF was funded with \$1,500,000. The FY26 budget anticipates additional funding of \$1,101,264 . While we in good faith cannot request additional funding in this year of budget constraints, this level of funding could be quickly exhausted for one local disaster.

HB 865 will allow additional emergency funding to be transferred from the Catastrophic Event Account (CEA), if needed to supplement the SDRF for an unfunded local or individual disaster relief. In FY26 the CEA will be funded at \$10,000,000. Any transfer of funds would, of course, depend on emergency justification and approval. There is no financial impact associated with HB 865.

HB 865 will also reduce the time allowed for Legislative Policy Committee to review and make a recommendations on whether to approve use of emergency funding from the SDRF, from 15 days to 5 days. We believe this is necessary to enable more rapid relief to our residents after a disaster, and to support local government recovery efforts. Disaster victims are often in need of food, housing, and personal health and safety support as soon as possible after a disaster. We are confident that local emergency managers and public safety professionals will be able to conduct emergency needs and damage assessments quickly and submit this information to the Legislative Policy Group enabling them to make an informed review and recommendation within the proposed 5 day period. This will expedite needed recovery relief to Maryland residents.

We will attend the House Committee hearing on February 25th to provide some additional information and testimony in support of this urgent legislation, and to answer your questions. Thank you for your consideration of this proposed legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K.J.S.', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Kevin J. Simmons
President
Emergency Management Officials Department
Maryland Municipal League