

Support for SB 564 – Catastrophic Event Account Transfer of Funds State Disaster Recovery Fund



Dear Chair Guzzone and Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee,

On behalf of the Maryland Emergency Management Association, the statewide professional organization representing emergency managers across Maryland, we write to express our strong support for SB 564. This bill will ensure that disaster relief funds are accessible when they are needed most by authorizing the transfer of funds from the Catastrophic Event Account to the State Disaster Recovery Fund and reducing the Legislative Policy Committee's review period from fifteen days to five days.

Timely financial resources are critical for disaster response and recovery. A delay of fifteen days in fund transfers can hinder relief efforts, prolong suffering, and slow rebuilding. Unlike financial crises that allow for extended deliberation, disasters require immediate action. Maryland has faced increasingly severe weather events, including record-breaking floods and hurricanes, underscoring the need for a responsive and manageable disaster recovery system.

Emergency managers follow a structured process to assess damage and determine funding needs. This includes a rapid needs assessment to identify life-threatening conditions, an initial damage assessment to evaluate community impacts, and a joint preliminary damage assessment conducted with FEMA and the Maryland Department of Emergency Management. Maryland's online damage reporting portal further improves accuracy by allowing residents to submit real-time reports, ensuring funds are allocated effectively.

The existing fifteen-day review period is redundant and delays essential assistance. Many disaster survivors need immediate access to temporary housing, emergency repairs, and financial assistance for uninsured losses. Prolonging access to these resources increases economic hardship, disrupts local economies, and impedes community recovery. Reducing the review period to five days will allow the state to act swiftly, minimizing disruptions and strengthening Maryland's ability to recover from disasters.

SB 564 is a common-sense measure that ensures Maryland's disaster recovery system is efficient and responsive. By streamlining fund transfers, this bill will help communities rebuild faster and prevent unnecessary delays in providing critical assistance.

The Maryland Emergency Management Association urges this Committee to give a **FAVORABLE** report for SB 564 and provide emergency managers with the tools necessary to protect Marylanders in times of crisis.

Sincerely,

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