

SB 564 - FAV - MDEM.pdf

Uploaded by: Anna Sierra

Position: FAV



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Governor | Wes Moore Lt. Governor | Aruna Miller Secretary | Russell J. Strickland

FAVORABLE - SB 564
Catastrophic Event Account - Transfer of Funds - State Disaster Recovery Fund
Budget and Taxation Committee
Hearing Date: 6 March 2025

The Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM) writes today in support of **SB 564 - Catastrophic Event Account - Transfer of Funds - State Disaster Recovery Fund**.

SB 564 would shorten the time for the Legislative Policy Committee to review and make comments on transfers of the funding from the Catastrophic Event Account (CEA) to the State Disaster Recovery Fund (SDRF). It also clarifies that the State Disaster Recovery Fund may accept funds from the Catastrophic Event Account.

Maryland is no stranger to emergencies and disasters which impact communities. While many of these can and are managed at the local level without any State support, some responses and impacts overwhelm local capabilities and require State assistance. The State Disaster Recovery Fund is designed to quickly and effectively assist local jurisdictions in providing disaster relief in the absence of federal funding aid. Increasing the speed with which the Department can provide funding to local jurisdictions will enhance the State's ability to meet local needs following a disaster.

In conclusion, the Maryland Department of Emergency Management respectfully requests a favorable report on **SB 564**. If you have any questions, please contact Anna Sierra, MDEM legislative liaison: anna.sierra1@maryland.gov.

SB 564 Hester Tesitmony.pdf

Uploaded by: Katie Fry Hester

Position: FAV

KATIE FRY HESTER
Legislative District 9
Howard and Montgomery Counties

Education, Energy, and
Environment Committee

Chair, Joint Committee on
Cybersecurity, Information Technology
and Biotechnology



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of SB564 - Catastrophic Event Account - Transfer of Funds - State Disaster Recovery Fund

March 6, 2025

Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and members of the Budget and Taxation Committee:

Thank you for your consideration of SB 564, which strengthens Maryland's ability to respond to disasters by ensuring the State Disaster Recovery Fund (SDRF) has the resources needed to provide timely relief when federal or other funding is unavailable.

The SDRF was established through legislation sponsored by Senator Elfreth and Delegate Jones and passed by this Committee in 2023. It serves as a critical safety net for disaster relief for Maryland residents when federal aid or other sources of funds are not authorized. Consistent and sufficient funding for the SDRF is essential to ensuring Maryland can respond swiftly and effectively to disasters. As my panel will elaborate, the speed and adequacy of disaster response funding directly impacts how quickly and successfully communities recover.

Disasters strike without warning, and delays in providing temporary housing, immediate repairs, and assistance for uninsured or underinsured losses can cause damages that span years into the future. SB 564 allows for emergency funding transfers from the Catastrophic Event Account (CEA) when the SDRF is depleted or when estimated disaster relief costs exceed the Fund's balance. These transfers would require emergency justification and approval, ensuring accountability while maintaining flexibility in times of crisis.

Additionally, SB 564 shortens the Legislative Policy Committee (LPC) review period for CEA funds from 15 days to 5 days. This expedited process ensures that aid reaches those in need without unnecessary delays. The reduced review period is feasible because emergency management officials conduct thorough damage assessments immediately after a disaster, providing the LPC with timely and

reliable information for decision-making. This change will enable the LPC to act swiftly to allocate critical relief funds where they are most needed.

Ensuring the State Disaster Recovery Fund remains well-funded and responsive will enhance Maryland's ability to recover and rebuild stronger - particularly in cases where federal assistance is not available. Nearly half of local disasters in Maryland require state response without federal aid, underscoring the necessity of a strong and dependable SDRF. With federal funding more uncertain than ever, SB 564 is critical to guarantee that Marylanders have access to disaster relief when they need it most.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report of SB 564.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Fry Hester". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "K" and "F".

Senator Katie Fry Hester
Howard and Montgomery Counties

SB0564-BT_MACo_SUP.pdf

Uploaded by: Kevin Kinnally

Position: FAV



Senate Bill 564

Catastrophic Event Account - Transfer of Funds - State Disaster Recovery Fund

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Budget and Taxation Committee

Date: March 6, 2025

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 564, which bolsters Maryland's disaster recovery framework by authorizing the transfer of funds from the Catastrophic Event Account to the State Disaster Recovery Fund under specified circumstances.

By strengthening the State's capacity to rapidly deploy emergency resources, this bill ensures counties can provide timely assistance when federal aid is unavailable or delayed.

The State Disaster Recovery Fund, established in 2023 with MACo's support, is an essential tool for local governments responding to emergencies. However, its effectiveness depends on adequate funding.

This bill provides a necessary mechanism to sustain this fund by allowing transfers from the Catastrophic Event Account when existing balances are insufficient. This approach ensures the State and local governments respond swiftly to disasters, reducing financial and operational strains on communities.

Counties serve as frontline responders when disasters strike, yet funding mechanisms remain fragmented, leading to delays in aid distribution. By creating a direct funding pathway between the Catastrophic Event Account and the State Disaster Recovery Fund, this bill helps local governments provide immediate assistance without waiting for uncertain federal support.

MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 564 to enhance Maryland's ability to deliver disaster relief and support counties in safeguarding communities.

MDEMA Support for SB 564.pdf

Uploaded by: Netta Squires

Position: FAV

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,

Christopher Meyd

Christopher Meyd, CEM, MDPEMP
Co Chair, Legislative Committee
Maryland Emergency Management Association

Netta Squires

Netta Squires, JD, MSL, CEM
Co Chair, Legislative Committee
Maryland Emergency Management Association

General Support Letter_SDRF 2025 SB 564 and HB 865

Uploaded by: Preeti Emrick

Position: FAV



MARYLAND
Association of
COUNTIES

COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGERS AFFILIATE

LETTER IN SUPPORT OF SB 564/ HB 865

CATASTROPHIC EVENT ACCOUNT – TRANSFER OF FUNDS - STATE DISASTER RECOVERY FUND

SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE / HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 21, 2025

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) Emergency Managers Affiliate **SUPPORTS SB 564/HB 865 - Catastrophic Event Account - Transfer of Funds - State Disaster Recovery Fund**, which seeks to strengthen Maryland’s ability to respond effectively to natural disasters and catastrophic events. This critical legislation would authorize the transfer of funds from the Catastrophic Event Account to the State Disaster Recovery Fund when the Fund’s balance has been depleted due to prior use, transfers, or anticipated costs exceeding its available resources. Additionally, the bill would streamline the review process by adjusting the number of days the Legislative Policy Committee has to assess and comment on fund transfers before the Governor may proceed via a budget amendment.

The State Disaster Recovery Fund plays an essential role in ensuring a rapid and efficient response to disasters, providing the necessary resources for relief, recovery, and rebuilding efforts. With Maryland facing more frequent and intense natural disasters, it is imperative that our disaster recovery system remains robust and well-funded.

This legislation, which proposes reducing the Legislative Policy Committee’s review period from 15 days to 5 days, allows for the faster distribution of disaster relief funds to impacted communities. Expedited review ensures minimal delays in recovery efforts, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of the state’s disaster response. The proposed reduction in review time is supported by comprehensive initial damage assessments conducted by Emergency Managers in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, ensuring that funding decisions are based on reliable and timely information.

Providing Emergency Managers with access to the necessary funds without delay is crucial to protecting Marylanders in times of crisis. SB 564/HB 865 promotes an efficient and responsive disaster relief system by enabling the State Disaster Recovery Fund and the Catastrophic Event Account to work together, providing timely and reliable assistance when it is needed most. Thus, the EM Affiliate asks this Committee to give SB 564/HB 865 a FAVORABLE report.

Sincerely,

Preeti Emrick

Preeti Emrick

MACo EM Affiliate President