



**LETTER IN SUPPORT OF SB 652 WITH AMENDMENTS**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT – LOCAL PERSONNEL – LEAVE WITH PAY**

**FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**FEBRUARY 18, 2025**

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) Emergency Managers Affiliate **SUPPORTS SB 652 / HB 1080 – Local Government – Local Personnel – Leave With Pay** with amendments. This bill establishes that employees of governmental units within counties or municipalities in the state may be eligible for disaster service leave with pay under specific circumstances. It grants authority to certain governmental units to waive specific requirements related to disaster service leave. Additionally, the bill permits county or municipal governmental units to provide paid leave under certain conditions.

This bill would provide significant benefits to Maryland by ensuring that government employees who engage in disaster response efforts can do so without facing financial hardship. By granting paid disaster service leave, the bill not only supports those who serve in times of crisis but also strengthens Maryland's overall emergency preparedness by removing barriers to participation in response and recovery operations. Encouraging public employees to take an active role in disaster relief fosters civic engagement, reinforces community resilience, and ensures a swift and effective response to emergencies.

Additionally, the bill offers local governments greater flexibility by allowing them to waive certain requirements for disaster service leave, enabling a more adaptive and efficient response to urgent situations. This measure will help safeguard public safety, bolster support for first responders and emergency volunteers, and enhance the state's ability to recover from disasters more effectively.

To further expand the impact of this legislation, the Affiliate proposes an amendment to extend these benefits to volunteers from Maryland Responds and the Maryland Defense Force. These dedicated individuals play a critical role in disaster response and recovery efforts, and their inclusion would strengthen Maryland's capacity to mobilize skilled personnel during emergencies. We respectfully request that both groups be added to the listed groups in section (B)(2) of the bill to ensure a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to disaster service leave. The Emergency Managers Affiliate urges the Committee to issue a report of **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** on SB 652.

Sincerely,

*Preeti Emrick*

Preeti Emrick

MACo EM Affiliate President